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President: Ms. Chatardova ..... (Czechia)

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The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.

Agenda item 5: High-level segment

Opening of the segment

1. **The President** declared open the high-level segment of the 2018 session of the Economic and Social Council, including the three-day ministerial meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Council.

Statement by the President

2. **The President** said that although progress had been made, the world was not on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Several examples reflected that progress was not sufficiently rapid. Extreme poverty had been reduced by two thirds compared to 1990, but there were more undernourished people in 2018 than in 2016. Twenty per cent of the world's population did not have access to proper sanitation, which was higher than the 12 per cent recorded in 2000. One billion people still did not have access to electricity, and renewable energy had not yet reached 20 per cent of overall usage.

3. While disaster risk reduction strategies were increasingly being designed, fewer than one hundred countries had implemented them. Close to 900 million people lived in slums and 91 per cent of the world breathed air that was below the levels of quality recommended by the World Health Organization. Material consumption was growing globally, even as national policies relating to sustainable consumption and production were developed. Serious environmental impacts had been witnessed, such as forest loss and declining productivity.

4. Despite improvements in domestic resource mobilization, there were insufficient funds to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Debt service as a proportion of exports had been rising for the previous five years in the least developed countries. Official development assistance (ODA) continued to decline. The digital divide between developed and developing countries remained worrisome, as did the reduced share in world merchandise exports held by developing regions. Although 102 countries were implementing national statistical plans, very few developing countries had fully funded such plans.

5. Overall, major disparities existed both within and between countries, with the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States lagging behind on almost all the targets. Middle-income countries also faced particular challenges, including the exclusion of large segments of the population from economic advancement. Disaggregated data was needed to reach the furthest behind.

6. However, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was being domesticated into concrete policies and measures throughout the world, with more inclusive and evidence-based approaches taking the fore. Science and technology must be continually harnessed to advance the Goals. Integrated water resources management was a solution for many challenges, as was scaled-up investment in renewable energy production. Policies were also being designed worldwide to tackle specifically urban problems, such as guaranteeing housing affordability, combating urban sprawl and ensuring access to public spaces. Many countries were implementing strategies for sustainable production and consumption, and conducting research on how to protect, restore and promote ecosystems.

7. In the face of such challenges, policy coherence and an enabling environment for sustainable development were necessary at all levels, including with a view to strengthening global partnerships and enhancing the means of implementation. Heads of State and Government should reaffirm their support for the 2030 Agenda and empower all communities to take ownership. The implementation process must also involve the business sector and leaders in science, technology and innovation. In that regard, she welcomed the new High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation established by the Secretary-General.

8. It was encouraging that two thirds of all countries had undertaken a voluntary national review with regard to their implementation of the 2030 Agenda. A strong cross-cutting message contained in the reviews was that the 2030 Agenda did not solely involve governments, but also the business sector, civil society, academia, communities and individuals, including youth. Countries had indicated that the 2030 Agenda was widely supported at the highest levels of government and had highlighted steps taken to integrate the Agenda into their national policy frameworks.

Statement by the President of the General Assembly

9. **Mr. Lajčák** (Slovakia), President of the General Assembly, said that there was no time to waste, as huge challenges lay ahead. Despite massive reductions in extreme poverty rates and the number of children forced to work, as well as the emergence of health-care innovations allowing for longer and healthier lives and a 10 per cent increase in electrical connectivity between 2000 and 2016, the international community must address a number of worrying trends.

10. The gains made, especially regarding extreme poverty, had not benefited everyone equally; many people in sub-Saharan Africa still lived in dire conditions. Moreover, many people worldwide continued to die of easily preventable and treatable diseases due to a lack of access to medical services. Although more children were enrolled in school, not all of them were receiving quality education that prepared them for a better life. One in six people still did not have access to safe drinking water; every minute, one child died from contaminated water or otherwise poor sanitation and hygiene. Gender inequality persisted, as did the digital divide. Current demands for water, food, energy and housing were already unsustainable and set to worsen, as the global population was expected to rise to almost 10 billion by 2050. Despite the fact that the planet was suffering from the effects of global warming, there was still significant pushback against efforts to fight climate change.

11. Without the global masterplan provided by the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, governments would be scrambling to find national strategies, while unilateralism, protectionism and extremism would attract ever-larger numbers of people. Serious economic uncertainty and environmental catastrophes would befall the world. Thankfully, the 2030 Agenda had been designed to be universal: instead of vague ideals, it had set up concrete goals and targets, as well as a clear follow-up mechanism.

12. The 2018 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development was gathered for the third time to review the progress made in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals; it was meeting at a time of great opportunity, given the reforms occurring throughout the United Nations system that would affect its development work on the ground. In 2018, the Forum was focused on patterns of production and consumption as well as living and working conditions. There were three areas in need of urgent attention. First, although funding was currently insufficient to achieve the Goals, being creative and proactive by going beyond traditional models and tapping into investment and capital flows would help to solve that problem. Second, a cross-pillar approach must be adopted, including through the exploration of non-traditional options for financing and partnerships, such as those involving artificial intelligence and communication technology. Third, it was necessary to prioritize inclusion. All systems — including at the United Nations — had been built by men and for men. In order to achieve the Goals, women must participate and take leadership positions; businesses, civil society and regional actors must also come to the table. Young people embodied the kind of innovative ideas needed to move forward.

13. More than half of all Member States — or 112 countries — had contributed voluntary national reviews, which was a clear sign of commitment. However, commitment was not enough: results must be seen on the ground. There was no time to waste.

Statement by the Deputy Secretary-General

14. **Ms. Mohammed** (Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations) said that almost three years had passed since world leaders had adopted the 2030 Agenda, a roadmap for peaceful and prosperous societies on a healthy planet. The High-level Political Forum was an annual opportunity to take stock of implementation efforts in that regard, assessing whether the world was on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, and what could be done differently to achieve better results in coming years.

15. There was already evidence of progress in certain areas, such as the reduction in maternal and child mortality and expanded access to electricity, as well as efforts to address global unemployment, the rate of forest loss worldwide and child marriage. In other areas, however, momentum was too slow or actively decelerating: for the first time in a decade, the number of people who were undernourished had increased, from 777 million people in 2015 to 815 million in 2016. Poverty was becoming an increasingly urban phenomenon, with most of the world's extreme poor projected to live in urban settings by 2035. Young people were still three times more likely to be unemployed, basic sanitation was still lacking in many parts of the world and progress towards renewable energy was not rapid enough. The world was witnessing alarming declines in biodiversity, as well as rising sea levels, coastal erosion, extreme weather conditions and increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases.

16. To date, sufficient resources had not been found to finance the 2030 Agenda. Many countries still did not meet their ODA commitments of 0.7 per cent of gross national income; leveraging private finance using ODA would remain a futile proposition until that trend was reversed.

17. The world had 12 years left to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and transformation towards resilient and sustainable societies was an absolute imperative. The Goals had already had a major impact around the world: governments had adapted plans and policies, new multi-stakeholder initiatives had emerged, and local and regional actors (including from the private sector) were increasingly taking ownership. However, current efforts were not sufficient or rapid enough.

18. The repositioning of the United Nations development system brought about by recent reforms would ensure better integration and coordination of all United Nations entities and partners, reinforcing collective responsibility and transparency. Efforts to achieve the Goals must be embedded at the local, national, regional and global levels alike and go beyond merely paying lip service to the core ideals of the 2030 Agenda. Such efforts would entail realigning plans, budgets, laws, business practices and personal decisions with the principles of inclusion and sustainability as enshrined in the 2030 Agenda.

19. Although 109 countries had national policies on sustainable consumption and production, more must be done to change existing patterns of behaviour and established practices. More investments should be made in crisis prevention and resilience-building, especially for the most vulnerable countries. Partnerships with civil society, the private sector, academia and youth must be expanded. Gender equality must be placed at the forefront of all sustainability efforts. Reliable, open, timely and disaggregated data should inform future investments and actions towards the Goals.

20. The Forum should examine new approaches to and tools for the implementation of the Goals, building on lessons from the voluntary national review process. It should work urgently towards the achievement of all 17 promises so that all people could live in peace and prosperity worldwide.

Statement by the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth

21. **Ms. Wickramanayake** (Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth) said that the world currently had the largest population of young people in history — 1.8 billion — 90 per cent of whom lived in developing countries. It was critical to leverage such shifting demographics for the progress of humankind and the health of the planet; to achieve sustainable development, new generations must know and care about the global development agenda, taking ownership of it for themselves. Although youth was essential to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, young people had traditionally been treated as the beneficiaries of development policies and agendas, rather than as active agents who could shape them. In reality, young people were the sustainable development generation and in many places were already leading the charge. Young people were also the most interconnected and digitally savvy generation in history, using technology to solve problems from the favelas of Brazil to the refugee camps of Jordan. To solve pressing global issues, the international community should tap into the dynamism of young innovators, activists, entrepreneurs and advocates who had the potential to disrupt the status quo and be a force for positive change.

22. The 2018 High-level Political Forum was focused on the transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies. Young people were active partners in those efforts, working to ensure universal and equitable access to clean drinking water and sanitation; making innovative energy consumption choices; increasing the eco-efficiency of consumption and minimizing waste and pollution; and advancing the New Urban Agenda aimed at making cities and human settlements more inclusive, safe and resilient.

23. In January 2018, youth representatives, activists and advocates presented their contributions related to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals during the annual Youth Forum of the Economic and Social Council. Policymakers had similarly shared their tactics for engaging young people and addressing their needs and priorities in national contexts. The creation of the Youth Forum in 2012 had marked a turning point in making the United Nations more accessible to young people. Given the principle of leaving no one behind, it was important to include youth in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as well as in the follow-up and review process.

24. In 2018, 47 countries had submitted their voluntary national reviews on the implementation process. While many countries had referenced youth in their reviews, more details were needed regarding efforts to ensure that the process was inclusive and youth engagement was meaningful. Best practices included allowing young people to directly contribute to their national reporting efforts — through seats in national commissions or the inclusion of independent contributions — and having youth delegates participate in official meetings at Headquarters. Even without having a formal seat at the table, young people found innovative and creative ways to participate, including through their own development work, campaigns to improve youth participation, shadow reporting, providing citizen-generated data, designing youth-led monitoring frameworks, and championing the Goals at the local level.

25. Youth contributions to the achievement of the Goals must be recognized and promoted, especially with regard to data collection. Countries should bring youth delegates to the Forum, as including young people in an official delegation added value and built intergenerational equity. By connecting with young people at the local level, youth delegates could bring a representative voice that would otherwise go unheard. The Forum must engage more broadly and more systematically with young people to

ensure that they could act as critical agents of change. Young women and girls, indigenous youth and young people living with disabilities must also be recognized as stakeholders in local and national processes. At the local level, youth representatives could participate in municipal participatory planning, budgeting and monitoring processes and establish relationships between the 2030 Agenda and the lives of young people.

26. Conversely, the international community must invest in quality, free education, universal health coverage and the empowerment of women and girls in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. However, doing so would require data disaggregated by age among other factors, lest stereotypes and over-generalizations about youth emerge. Concerted action should be taken to address the gaps in data for young people.

27. As the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, she had met young people around the world and been struck by how often they had asked what they could do to solve problems in their community and contribute to sustainable development. In fact, the desire to participate was a defining characteristic of young people. The international community must put aside its myths and preconceptions and open the door to young people in order to achieve the 17 ambitious Sustainable Development Goals.

Keynote address

28. **Ms. Yeoh** (United Nations Development Programme Goodwill Ambassador and actor), delivering a keynote address on the transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies, said that sustainability was both an individual and a collective responsibility. Governments, the private sector and individual citizens must all participate and contribute to United Nations efforts. Although the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals provided an ambitious blueprint for governments, no change would be visible on the ground unless individuals made a conscious choice to alter their consumption patterns. However, governments could assist that shift by promoting policies that helped raise consciousness about consumption choices, and by ensuring that the transition towards sustainable development was affordable, fair, and economically viable. Businesses could likewise develop products and technologies that sped up the transformation.

29. As an actor and a Goodwill Ambassador, her job was communication. United voices could have a great impact: governments must listen when their citizens demanded change. Focusing on Goal 6, she noted that signs of water shortages were widespread. Around 700 million people worldwide suffered from water scarcity and one-third of global groundwater systems were already experiencing distress. Water availability and quality were also affected by pollution, caused by intensive agriculture, industrial production, mining and untreated urban runoff and wastewater.

30. As consumers, global citizens were not always aware that they were part of water shortage and pollution problems — but they could also be part of the solution. Individuals should be mindful of their water footprint, whether the water required to grow their food or to produce their clothes. For example, more than 10,000 litres of water were required to produce a single pair of jeans on average.

31. Bold actions were required at all levels to transition to a low-carbon economy. Energy efficiency programmes must be implemented while also investing in renewable energy sources. In fact, businesses could accelerate the transition to a sustainable energy system whilst significantly reducing their own carbon footprints and saving money. Although governments played a key role in shifting consumption patterns, citizens also had the collective power to demand climate-neutral solutions and products, and to shape a carbon- neutral economy with their purchasing choices.

32. Cities were home to over half the world's population and produced about 75 per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions: urban citizens could therefore have a huge impact if they were to collectively change their habits. It was thus necessary to empower citizens to achieve Goal 12 of ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns. By 2030, 5.4 billion individuals would be part of the global middle class, leading to increased consumption and resource strain. In many parts of the world, overconsumption already had evident negative social and ecological repercussions.

33. The fashion industry was closely intertwined with the daily lives of ordinary citizens; overconsumption was rampant in that sector, engendering major environmental harm. The garment industry was an ideal example of a sector where both government policies and individual choices could play a huge role. A sustainable society must have consciously dressed citizens. Trees could be used to make clothes in a sustainable way, while being mindful of Goal 15 and protecting the delicate balance of the ecosystem and fighting deforestation, land degradation and biodiversity loss. A sustainable society would be possible with simple and practical solutions, but could not achieved without informed citizens, progressive businesses and supportive governments.

The meeting rose at 9.50 a.m.

In the absence of Ms. Chatardova (Czechia), Mr. Matjila (South Africa), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.55 p.m.

Agenda item 5: High-level segment (*continued*)
(E/2018/33, E/2018/50, E/2018/61 and E/2018/66)

Introductory statements

1. **Mr. Harris** (Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the main theme of the 2018 session, "From global to local: supporting sustainable and resilient societies in urban and rural communities" (E/2018/61); the overview of the *World Economic and Social Survey 2018: Frontier technologies for sustainable development* (E/2018/50) and the report of the Secretary-General on harnessing new technologies to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2018/66), said that the report on the main theme of the session discussed global commitments and approaches to building resilience and reducing risk. It identified drivers of risk and proposed actions and tools for building sustainable, resilient societies at the local level. It emphasized the importance of national and local ownership strategies, strengthening local capacities and systems, foresight and risk planning, policy integration and inclusive participation.

2. Turning to the overview of the *World Economic and Social Survey 2018*, he said that the overview reminded readers that, despite their potential for good, new technologies could exacerbate underemployment, unemployment and income inequality, and they raised moral and ethical concerns. The United Nations and the international community needed a better understanding of how technological progress could be steered to support sustainable development in order to develop policies that maximized benefits and mitigated risks and negative externalities. The overview underscored the need to balance efficiency, equity and ethical considerations, the importance of robust international cooperation in managing frontier technologies and the role of the United Nations in steering them to support sustainable development.

3. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on harnessing new technologies to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, he said that the report aimed to launch a dialogue among Member States and relevant actors on how to prepare for the huge impact of technologies and mobilize them for the common good. It discussed the role and responsibilities of governments and the steps they could take to harness opportunities and address potential risks by working with a wide range of stakeholders. The United Nations must be able to provide spaces such as the Technology Facilitation Mechanism and the Internet Governance Forum where stakeholders could come together to discuss frameworks, exchange good practices and reflect on where protocols, principles or other mechanisms or incentives might be needed.

4. However, to provide a meaningful platform for collaboration, the Organization must strengthen its own capacity to engage with new technologies and new technology actors. For that reason, the Secretary-General had initiated broad consultations on defining a United Nations strategy on new technology. The United Nations needed to improve its understanding of how new technologies affected specific mandates, learn whether and how it could use them to improve mandate delivery and internal management and be able to share lessons learned with Member States and other actors.

5. **Mr. Ocampo** (Chair of the Committee for Development Policy), introducing the report of the Committee for Development Policy on its twentieth session (E/2018/33), said that the Committee had conducted its triennial review of the list of least developed countries. It had addressed the monitoring of countries that were graduating or had graduated from the list and the need for improved assistance for graduating least developed countries, and it had analysed the voluntary national reviews. It had also addressed aspects of the 2030 Agenda pledge to leave no one behind.

6. In its review of the least developed category, the Committee had recommended Bhutan, São Tomé and Príncipe, Solomon Islands and Kiribati for graduation. As graduating countries, they required support for the transition and for further development.

7. Keeping the pledge to leave no one behind was central to the transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies. As part of its work, the Committee had analysed progress on that pledge from multiple perspectives. Despite many successful experiences, at the current pace, it would be impossible to attain the Sustainable Development Goals in many critical areas, including education, health, housing and poverty eradication. Extreme inequality persisted in and among countries. Many were being pushed farther behind by technological development and climate change or continued to lack the productive capacity for sustainable development. Many had even undergone re-primarization.

8. Fundamental changes were required. First, it was necessary to address not only the problems of those at the bottom but also the concentration of income, wealth

and political power at the top. Policy should be driven by the needs of the deprived and disadvantaged, which meant removing barriers to political and civic participation and ensuring that government was accountable to all citizens. Second, targeted interventions would often be ineffective unless the principle of leaving no one behind was reflected in strategic frameworks and macroeconomic and production-sector policies. Third, policies, legislation and investments should be based on a careful analysis of benefits and risks, including potential negative effects on other sectors, groups and countries as well as future generations.

9. In its analysis of the 2017 voluntary national reviews, the Committee had found almost universal recognition of the principle of leaving no one behind. However, to be more effective as a mechanism for sharing experiences, the reviews should provide more in-depth information on what strategies had been used to reach the most marginalized and vulnerable and how complex policy trade-offs had been addressed.

10. Developing countries needed the ability to build sound and efficient redistributive tax systems and the policy space to define and implement their own strategies. Unfortunately, they were hampered by insufficient international tax cooperation, unregulated global finance, trade rules that did not facilitate market access for the poorest countries, intellectual property rights regimes that were skewed against the poor and the absence of an orderly, timely and fair procedure for sovereign debt crisis resolution. Given the extremely limited fiscal capacity of the poorest countries, the international community should institute trade regimes based on fair and equitable terms, enable them to harness the benefits of migration, remittance and diaspora engagement and prevent illicit financial flows.

11. With respect to development cooperation, new and traditional providers and recipients should be integrated in a more comprehensive and representative framework. Development cooperation strategies based on country needs should be preferred over isolated interventions, and cooperation policies should contribute to guaranteeing minimum social standards for all people. Increased official development assistance (ODA) was essential.

(a) Ministerial meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (*continued*)

General debate

12. **The President** opened the general debate of the 2018 high-level segment on the theme "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies".

13. **Mr. Remengesau, Jr.** (Palau), President of the Republic, speaking on behalf of the Group of Pacific Small Island Developing States, said that devastating weather events were battering their infrastructure and their settlements, and sea level rise threatened their coastlines, their water supplies and, for some, their very existence. At the same time, greenhouse gas-induced acidification of the Pacific Ocean threatened their livelihoods and way of life. Because of their vulnerability to economic shocks and the effects of climate change, building resilience was part and parcel of their sustainable development strategies and was underscored in their approaches to each of the Sustainable Development Goals under review in the high-level political forum. They had adopted a regional framework for resilient development that was complimented by numerous national development plans emphasizing the reduction of natural disaster risk. In view of growing threats to their already scarce freshwater supplies, they welcomed the recent launch of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018–2028, and called for increased partnerships. As small island developing States (SIDS), they were strongly committed to transitioning to renewable energies, and they welcomed the Secretary-General's acknowledgement of the importance of traditional and local knowledge-holders in the management of local ecosystems.

14. Those States wished to emphasize Goal 17 on revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development. During the regional preparation for the mid-term review of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, the States had repeated their call for genuine and durable partnerships in the context of the 2030 Agenda. They looked forward to the report on the review of United Nations system support for small island developing States and to the full implementation of its recommendations.

15. **Ms. Pucheta de Correa** (Paraguay), Vice-President of the Republic, speaking on behalf of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, said that her country, which held the Group presidency for 2018–2019, was committed to the promotion of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked

Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, which was an integral part of the 2030 Agenda. The Group would give priority to preparing for the Programme of Action mid-term review in 2019 and was confident that strategies could be agreed for accelerating its implementation. It remained firmly committed to continuing to strengthen the mechanisms for monitoring progress on the Sustainable Development Goals through participation in the voluntary national reviews.

16. Speaking in her national capacity, she said that the theme of transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies accorded with the objectives of the Vienna Programme of Action, which was the basis of her country's national development plan. Paraguay had the largest per capita reserve of fresh water in the world and ample electrical power, almost all renewably generated. Her Government had made progress in providing clean drinking water and had developed a plan to make Paraguay a regional energy hub. Furthermore, in view of the link between water and power generation, Itaipú Binacional, the Brazilian-Paraguayan operator of the Itaipú hydroelectric power plant, had joined with the United Nations to launch Sustainable Water and Energy Solutions, an initiative aimed at creating an international multi-stakeholder platform for capacity improvement, dialogue and cooperation. A national water and sanitation company had been established to address the problem of access to water in rural areas, and her Government would continue to work to improve access to both water and power, particularly for rural women.

17. Clean, renewable energy led to clean industrialization and the production of goods and services, thereby fostering sustainable economic development. Energy security was essential for economic growth and should be a priority for all countries.

18. **Ms. Nasr** (Egypt), Minister of Investment and International Cooperation, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that Member States were still not fully on track to implement the 2030 Agenda. With regard to Goals 1 and 2, poverty eradication and food security, more than 780 million people remained below the international poverty line, and the number of undernourished people had actually risen. The scale and ambition of the 2030 Agenda required strengthening the developing countries' means of implementation and creating an enabling global environment for development through sustainable financing options, global partnerships and long-term investments. The Group reaffirmed the need to address the diverse needs and challenges faced by African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States, conflict and post-conflict countries, countries and peoples living under foreign occupation and middle-income countries.

19. Progress had also been insufficient on the Goals under review. Given the critical nature of access to managed drinking water and basic sanitation services, the Group applauded the holding of the eighth World Water Forum in March and the High-level International Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development" in June. It stressed the clear and persistent need to ensure universal access to affordable, reliable energy, to address the economic, environmental and social challenges of cities and human settlements, to ensure more sustainable consumption and production patterns, to protect and restore terrestrial ecosystems and promote their sustainable use, to manage forests sustainably, to combat desertification, and to halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. All stakeholders must shoulder their responsibility to ensure timely and full implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

20. **Mr. Vella** (Observer for the European Union), Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, said that the Secretary-General's report on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2018/64) was a clear call to action. The European Union would rise to the challenges through better cooperation and remained committed to leading on sustainable development. Later in 2018, the European Commission would publish a reflection paper on the European Union's sustainable future, and 24 of its member States would be presenting voluntary national reviews during the forum.

21. Given the cross-cutting nature of the Sustainable Development Goals, investment in achieving the Goals under review would benefit the 2030 Agenda as a whole. The European Union reaffirmed its commitments regarding the right to safe drinking water and sanitation and recognized the importance of access to clean, sustainable, reliable, modern and affordable energy for all, especially the most vulnerable and the poorest. It underscored the value of the New Urban Agenda and had allocated billions of euros for sustainable urban development across Europe.

22. In the crucial area of sustainable consumption and production, the European Union was committed to a low-carbon, resource efficient economy and supported the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns. Its Circular Economy Action Plan addressed the lifecycle of materials and products and had given rise to a strategy on plastics. With the world's largest network of

protected areas, the European Union was a leader in integrating biodiversity and ecosystem services into all relevant sectors. It welcomed the conclusions and recommendations of the financing for development forum and remained committed to developing innovative ways to mobilize resources.

23. With regard to external action, the European Union External Investment Plan was boosting private investment in Africa and its European neighbourhood. As the largest provider of official development assistance, it called on others to meet their ODA commitments.

24. Achieving a robust monitoring and review process for the Goals would require further improvement of data and statistics and the involvement of all stakeholders. The European Union looked forward to the review of the high-level political forum process at the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, which was certain to make the forum more effective, and reiterated its full support for the Secretary-General's ambitious reform agenda.

25. **Mr. Kamal** (Bangladesh), Minister for Planning, speaking on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries, said that the percentage of the population in the least developed countries with access to water and electricity was roughly half the global figure, and the percentage of the urban population living in slums was almost triple. In view of the level of investment required to meet the Sustainable Development Goals in those countries, the Group was deeply concerned to see hardly any progress on Goal 17 and no significant progress on establishing the investment promotion regime for foreign direct investment.

26. The least developed countries faced serious threats. In the past two years, their debt burden had doubled. Official development assistance was declining, and inward-looking, anti-globalization policies were on the rise. According to some estimates, almost 250 million people in least developed countries had been affected by shocks and crises between 2010 and 2017.

27. Action was required at all levels to mobilize resources and provide technical assistance for building capacity and resilience in the least developed countries, which should be accompanied by their own sustained efforts to mobilize resources domestically, build strong social safety nets and fiscal buffers and institute market-based insurance programmes. The Group reiterated its appeal to all stakeholders to provide technical and financial support to the newly established Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries. The vulnerabilities of countries that had graduated from the least developed category should be brought into the mainstream development discourse.

28. **Ms. Robinson-Regis** (Trinidad and Tobago), Minister of Planning and Development, speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the third high-level political forum would afford Member States an opportunity to take stock of their progress on the Goals under review and recalibrate their approach as necessary. CARICOM looked forward to the presentation of voluntary national reviews, in which two of its members would be participating.

29. Eradicating poverty, changing sustainable patterns of consumption and production and managing the natural resource base for economic and social development were essential requirements for sustainable development. Sustainable development also required promoting sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth, creating greater opportunities for all, reducing inequalities, raising basic standards of living, fostering equitable social development and inclusion, and promoting the integrated and sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems.

30. In view of the above, sustainable finance was an absolute necessity. That would require a collective focus on how financial markets could be aligned with sustainable development and on concrete ways for financing it. The CARICOM countries' ability to follow through on the 2030 Agenda was compromised by their high levels of debt. Furthermore, their small economies were vulnerable to economic shocks, natural disasters and the effects of climate change, and the termination of correspondent banking relations had the potential to threaten their economic stability and their capacity to remain integrated in global financial, trade and economic systems.

31. CARICOM reiterated its call for a re-examination of the allocation criteria for international development cooperation, which should be based on methodologies that accounted for the multidimensional nature of development; accordingly, it welcomed the forthcoming high-level meeting on middle-income countries. For its members, sustainable development could not be divorced from the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, and the attention to the development needs of small island developing States was thus welcome.

32. **Mr. Muia** (Kenya), Principal Secretary of National Treasury and Planning, speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that many African countries had presented their voluntary national reviews in the previous two years, and more would be participating in 2018. The African countries welcomed the Goals under review, each of which touched on a fundamental human

right threatened by increasing climate events. Africa continued to lose arable land to desertification, which contributed to growing urbanization and massive migration flows. The African countries supported the International Decade for Action: Water for Sustainable Development 2018-2028. Indeed, all six Sustainable Development Goals under review tackled important aspects of their efforts towards socioeconomic transformation. Sustainable and resilient transformation was in line not only with those Goals but also with Agenda 2063 of the African Union, and it required integrated strategies and approaches.

33. Africa was unlikely to achieve affordable and clean energy for all by 2030. Although some countries had made significant headway on electrification, there had been less progress with respect to clean cooking and the use of modern renewable energies. It was crucial to address data gaps and reliability, especially with regard to biomass, in order to better inform monitoring and investment planning.

34. African cities were growing fast, but that did not make them productive. Productive cities required a high density of economic activities arranged in a well laid-out and properly managed spatial economy. Sustainable urban development would require urgent short-term and thoughtful long-term actions coordinated under broader national development frameworks. North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation should be further enhanced to facilitate technology transfer and the sharing of experiences.

35. Innovative solutions and enabling policies were needed to reverse unsustainable consumption patterns and practices. Science and technological innovation should drive inclusive and sustainable development, with special emphasis on women and girls, young people and vulnerable groups. Investment in research and development should be increased substantially and attention should be given to the development of climate information and services, resilient infrastructure and green industrialization capacity. Technology should be harnessed to improve data collection and analysis.

36. With respect to means of implementation, developed countries must honour their historic obligations and responsibilities as part of their commitment to revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development. That meant implementing the concrete policies and actions outlined in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which was an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

37. The international community must effectively address illicit financial flows and their negative consequences. Multinational corporations and similar entities based in developed countries should pay taxes in the African countries where their revenues were generated.

38. **Mr. Escalante Hasbún** (El Salvador), Permanent Representative of El Salvador to the United Nations, speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that CELAC welcomed the second meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development and its intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations. It stressed the importance of the regional level in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including with respect to means of implementation and the financing for development process, and it was grateful for the role of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. It noted the contributions of the eighth World Water Forum and the High Level Panel on Water. The region's commitment to the implementation of the Agenda was illustrated by the number of Latin American and Caribbean States participating in the voluntary national review process, some of them for the second time. CELAC applauded the progress made by the States that had already incorporated the Sustainable Development Goals into their national and local plans.

39. All countries — including least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States, countries in conflict and post-conflict situations, countries that had recently graduated from the least developed category and middle-income countries — faced specific challenges for sustainable development. The allocation criteria for international development cooperation, including ODA, should be based on methodologies that accounted for the multidimensional nature of development, with a view to building a global architecture of cooperation in which all developing countries received support in accordance with their challenges, vulnerabilities and structural gaps. CELAC welcomed the global discussions of the impact of technological change during the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals and the twenty-first session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development.

40. The high-level political forum on sustainable development was meeting for the first time since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 72/279 on repositioning of the United Nations development system to provide better support for the 2030 Agenda.

41. The CELAC countries remained committed to promoting gender equity and equality and the advancement of women as cross-cutting components of

their policies, strategies and actions. They reaffirmed the importance of the sovereign right of States to dispose of their resources and the need to respect each country's policy space for sustainable development. National development efforts should be supported by an enabling international environment, including coherent and mutually supporting world trade, monetary and financial systems, and strengthened and enhanced global economic governance. The CELAC countries were committed to pursuing policy coherence and an enabling environment for development.

42. **Mr. Mohamed** (Maldives), Permanent Representative of Maldives to the United Nations, speaking on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, said that resilience in the face of global crises and natural disasters was critical for small island developing States. They saw the high-level political forum as a critical space for highlighting their specific challenges, and they looked forward to working towards full implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

43. Without significant acceleration of global efforts, the ambitious goals of the 2030 Agenda would not be achieved, particularly in countries such as theirs. Small island developing States faced unique challenges, ranging from remoteness, limited resource bases and structural limitations to vulnerability to climate events, which were increasing in frequency and intensity. To build resilience and implement both the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway, they needed improved access to capacity-building, financing and support, including support for national statistical offices. They were actively seeking new partnerships that would enable risk-informed, sustainable investment in infrastructure and land use.

44. The small island States placed great value on the ministerial declaration of the 2018 high-level political forum on sustainable development (E/HLPF/2018/L.3). As an intergovernmentally negotiated document, it did not fully reflect all of their desires, but they hoped that the engagement and momentum built would lead to progress. They looked forward to the 2019 high-level review of the SAMOA pathway, which would help them to accelerate and improve their efforts.

45. **Mr. Moir Sandoval** (Guatemala), Secretary of Planning and Programming, speaking on behalf of the Like-minded Group of Supporters of Middle-Income Countries, said that the middle-income countries faced serious obstacles to confronting poverty, inequality, external debt and environmental vulnerabilities. Improvements in their macroeconomic indicators did not necessarily indicate progress in eradicating poverty, since even high growth middle-income countries had high or rising levels of inequality. Middle-income countries accounted for 70 per cent of the global population, one third of global gross domestic product and almost three quarters of the world's poor. Many were still struggling to strengthen their institutional capacities for water resource management and the implementation of energy technologies, as well as respond to rapid urbanization, improve housing and infrastructure resilience, increase awareness of sustainable consumption and production, counter the effects of pollution and loss of biodiversity and make technological innovation work for sustainable development.

46. Development aid fell as average income rose, leaving middle-income countries without sufficient affordable, long-term financing to invest in the Sustainable Development Goals. The United Nations system should continue providing assistance to countries within existing mandates and resources until they achieved sustainable development. It was crucial for the United Nations development system to create a systemic focus on middle-income countries, since they represented more than two thirds of the country programmes and almost 60 per cent of country-level expenditures. The Group had high expectations for the first high-level meeting of the General Assembly on middle-income countries, which it hoped would reinforce the importance of developing a comprehensive long-term strategy within the United Nations system.

47. The Group welcomed the initiatives to promote debt exchanges as a means of restructuring external debt. In view of the strategic development role that middle-income countries could play by sharing experiences and good practices, it urged the United Nations to intensify its efforts to encourage middle-income countries to engage in South-South and triangular cooperation.

48. As suggested in the Secretary-General's report on development cooperation with middle-income countries (A/72/329), the experience of the Committee for Development Policy in defining the criteria for the categorization and graduation of the least developed countries could be used as a good reference for classifying middle-income countries according to a more appropriate set of multidimensional measures of economic, social and environmental progress, such as indices for poverty, human development and economic and environmental vulnerability. Unless the international community systematically rejected the current approach of measuring development by economic growth without considering the special conditions and challenges of middle-income countries,

they would be unable to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

49. **Mr. Ruiz Cabañas** (Mexico), Vice-Minister of Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights), speaking on behalf of the LGBTI Core Group, said that too many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people lived in poverty. LGBTI people often experienced multiple and intersecting forms of violence and discrimination and faced barriers to health care and other basic social services, housing, education, labour market participation and even access to official identity documents. To leave no one behind, governments should ensure full respect for the rights of LGBTI people, including by protecting them from discrimination and violence, and should team with the private sector to offer them support and opportunities. The Group hoped that the discussion in the high-level political forum would highlight the importance of implementing national policies based on the full inclusion of LGBTI persons across the globe.

50. **Mr. Djani** (Indonesia), Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations, speaking on behalf of Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Turkey and Australia (MIKTA), said that the MIKTA countries welcomed the growing prominence of the high-level political forum, during which 47 countries, including Australia and Mexico, would be presenting their voluntary national reviews. It was essential to revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development and to provide comparably ambitious means of implementation. That would require strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships with the private sector, civil society and academia, improving access to financial resources, promoting public and private investments, and building capacities, including in data-related fields. It would also require full, effective and timely implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

51. To create sustainable and resilient societies, concrete actions were needed to promote the sustainable use of water, expand access to drinking water and sanitation systems, foster clean, renewable energy, ensure more sustainable use and management of forests and land, mainstream biodiversity in the productive sectors, promote inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable human settlement and encourage sustainable consumption and production. They welcomed collaboration and sharing in all of those areas, including with respect to climate change adaptation and oceans management. They also invited all stakeholders to provide financial and technical assistance to the newly inaugurated Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries.

52. In view of the inclusive nature of the Sustainable Development Goals and the crucial contributions of vulnerable groups, the MIKTA countries had promoted the inclusion of disabled people and high quality disability statistics at the most recent session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and they had showcased women's leadership at the 2018 Women Innovators from MIKTA exhibition. They had also organized the MIKTA Education in Emergencies Challenge to elicit ideas for new ways to deliver education in emergency situations, particularly for girls.

53. In recognition of the positive potential of technological change, the MIKTA countries had launched the MIKTA Innovation Group, which brought together inventive thinkers to promote the commercialization of new technologies and creative ideas. They shared the Secretary-General's view that the introduction of new technologies should leave no one behind and welcomed the repositioning of the United Nations development system.

54. **Mr. Braun** (Luxembourg), Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the United Nations, speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends on Children and the Sustainable Development Goals, said that the 2030 Agenda should be an agenda of the people, by the people and for the people. Countries around the world should empower and enlist the support of every citizen, beginning with the youngest. Investing in children was essential for the creation of sustainable, resilient societies. It meant not only enabling them to reach their full potential, as was their right; but also promoting inclusive growth, a cleaner, more sustainable environment, safe and stable communities and countries, strong public institutions and a vibrant public sector.

55. Of the members of the Group, 17 were presenting voluntary national reviews in 2018, and 6 had already volunteered for 2019. All were committed to improving the lives of children and young people. Other Member States should follow their lead by creating opportunities for them to learn about and take action on the Goals and by soliciting and using their views in decision-making processes.

56. To ensure that children were not left behind, it was vital to invest in tools and systems to improve the quality of data on children. It was also necessary to improve the tracking of social spending on interventions and programmes that were critical for improving their lives.

57. Looking ahead to 2019, the Group saw the two meetings of the high-level political forum and the

thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child as strategic opportunities for Member States to recommit to children's rights and to local, national and global action for and with children.

58. **Mr. Meza-Cuadra** (Peru), Permanent Representative of Peru to the United Nations, speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends for Disaster Risk Reduction, said that increasingly severe disasters disproportionately affected the poorest and most vulnerable, making disaster risk reduction a priority for attaining the Sustainable Development Goals. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction provided a global policy framework for integrating disaster risk reduction, sustainable development and climate change, and the online Monitor tool had been created to monitor its implementation. States must translate the Sendai Framework into integrated national and subnational programmes by developing local disaster risk reduction strategies, translating them into local legislation and including disaster risk reduction expertise in national sustainable development mechanisms. The Group urged all countries to prioritize having disaster reduction strategies in place by 2020 in accordance with the Sendai Framework and to integrate them into their sustainable development and climate adaption strategies.

59. To pay for disaster risk reduction, national sustainable development frameworks and infrastructure plans should be aligned with disaster risk reduction strategies, and incentives and regulations should be established to promote and regulate risk-informed private- and public-sector investments. At the regional and international levels, dedicated financing mechanisms should be created, and disaster risk reduction should be mainstreamed in development assistance and financing. The Group urged the global community to provide adequate support for small, vulnerable countries to be able to meet their Sendai commitments.

60. Welcoming the recent adoption of the Strategic Framework on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters, he said that coordinated efforts and quality geospatial information and services were critical to building safer, resilient communities. In view of the importance of a collaborative and coordinated approach, the Group encouraged multilateral, regional and bilateral cooperation.

61. Development that was not risk-informed was not sustainable. The Group encouraged all countries to participate in the 2019 session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, which offered an opportunity to discuss disaster risk reduction issues and would provide insight for the high-level political forum.

62. **Ms. Mesi** (Albania), Deputy Prime Minister, said that the Albanian Parliament had adopted a resolution committing her country to the 2030 Agenda, and an interministerial committee had been set up to oversee its implementation. Some 25 universities had agreed to play an active role, and the National Council for Civil Society had issued a public statement supporting it.

63. Albania's voluntary national review had been prepared in consultation with various stakeholders and reported progress in consolidating public institutions, professionalizing and depoliticizing the civil service, fighting corruption and organized crime, reforming property rights and the justice system and improving human rights standards. In recognition of that progress, the European Commission had recommended starting accession negotiations with Albania in 2019. Albania would continue to strive to embody the European values of unity, justice and diversity.

64. Women accounted for almost a third of the Albanian Parliament and for half of the Cabinet. Albania encouraged innovation and competitiveness. Its successful urban revitalization programme had promoted regional economic growth, and it would continue to focus on improving water and land management.

65. **Ms. Gavrilescu** (Romania), Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Environment, said that Romania aimed to create an enabling environment for sustainable development by addressing inequalities of all kinds and creating opportunities through medium- and long-term strategies, which were highlighted in its national voluntary review. It advocated shared responsibility, full solidarity and collective action for implementing the 2030 Agenda.

66. As a member of the European Union, Romania was committed to moving towards a circular economy, particularly in the area of plastics, as part of an integrated approach to sustainable development. During the preparation process for the first semester of 2019, when Romania would assume the European Union presidency, it had advanced sustainable development as a top European priority. In view of the utmost importance of the environmental dimension of sustainable development, the resolutions, decisions and outcome documents of the United Nations Environment Assembly were crucial for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

67. **Mr. Ulziisaikhan** (Mongolia), Deputy Prime Minister, said that Mongolia had been an early adopter

of the Sustainable Development Goals. A parliamentary subcommittee and a cabinet-level committee set sustainable development policy and provided guidance for the relevant ministries, agencies and local governments, and in 2018 it had adopted a "three pillar" development strategy for economic, governance and policy reforms. The 2030 Agenda was being implemented in tandem with other internationally agreed development agendas, including the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction.

68. Following the entry into force of the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries in 2017, Mongolia had organized the first meeting of the Board of Governors and the inaugural meeting of the think tank in 2018. He drew attention to the Ulaanbaatar Declaration and Action Plan 2018–2020 of the Asia Regional Plan for Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, which had been adopted at the recent Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. Mongolia had adopted a national strategy for the development of statistics that would strengthen its capacity to measure national Goal indicators, and it would be delivering its first voluntary national review in 2019.

69. **Mr. Briones** (Ecuador) National Secretary of Planning and Development, said that his Government's national development plan aimed to eradicate corruption, child malnutrition, extreme poverty, gender-based violence, child abuse and all forms of discrimination. It had signed cooperation agreements with various countries and was seeking to develop long-term relationships with academia, civil society and the private sector.

70. Noting Ecuador's intensive efforts to provide security along the Colombian border, he said that international cooperation had proved invaluable and urged other actors to provide assistance. Despite the complex economic situation, Ecuador had allocated substantial resources to promoting development in the Amazon basin, where international cooperation would also be critical. His Government asked the international financial institutions for their understanding while it worked to reverse complex economic problems that it had not created.

71. **Mr. Duclos** (Canada), Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, noting that Canada would be presenting its first voluntary national review that week, said that his Government was implementing policies and programmes to improve the lives of people who had long been underrepresented, including indigenous people, women, immigrants and refugees, disabled people and LGBTI people.

72. Canada had adopted a feminist international assistance policy based on its belief in the far-reaching benefits of empowering women and girls. It was making significant investments in tackling climate change, improving water sustainability and protecting marine and coastal areas and would be co-hosting a conference on the blue economy in November in Nairobi. It acknowledged that small island developing States, least developed countries and other countries in special situations often faced unique challenges for sustainable development.

73. Canada was deeply committed to a rules-based international order. The 2030 Agenda was an example of how States could work together to achieve common goals. His Government would continue to work with other Member States, other levels of government in Canada, indigenous peoples, civil society, the private sector, international organizations and others to bring about a prosperous and sustainable future for all.

74. **Ms. Leuthard** (Switzerland), Federal Councillor and Head of the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications, said that, as a strong advocate of a robust monitoring and review mechanism, Switzerland was pleased to be presenting its voluntary national review. In the two and a half years since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, progress had been glacial or even negative. For example, the parties to the Paris Agreement were struggling to meet the end-2018 deadline for adopting rules for the formulation of nationally determined contributions, including clear guidance on the cooperative market-based approaches and on reporting and verification, and they had yet to submit national plans for limiting temperature rise. Urgent action was needed at the next Conference of the Parties.

75. Action must also be taken to address the negative impacts of forced migration and turn migration to the advantage of sustainable development. Comprehensive, coherent, long-term strategies were needed throughout the migratory cycle. Switzerland therefore welcomed the recent successful conclusion of the negotiations on the global covenant for safe, orderly and regular migration.

76. Partnerships with the private sector and academia were vital for the Agenda. In addition to mobilizing additional financial resources, public-private partnerships should encourage the private sector to adopt more sustainable business models. Sustainability should not mean sacrificing profitability. The steady

growth in sustainable financing showed that investing in development was profitable. As an international city, Geneva could contribute much to bringing about the necessary change in mind-sets.

77. Switzerland fully supported the Secretary-General's agenda to reform the United Nations development system. Continuing to go it alone amidst the challenges and interconnectivity of the modern world was not an option.

78. **Ms. Frick** (Liechtenstein), Minister of Foreign Affairs, Justice and Culture, said that Liechtenstein had set objectives for Sustainable Development Goals 4, 5, 7 and 9 in the 2017–2021 government programme and had defined specific actions for attaining them. Moreover, it was working to increase official development assistance to 0.5 per cent of gross national income in the near future.

79. If managed well, migration was an engine for growth, sustainable development, cultural enrichment and innovation. The global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration was a first step in that direction. Liechtenstein promoted the inclusion of migrants and refugees through innovative basic language instruction. The non-profit language initiative was her country's contribution to the road map of the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, a group of United Nations Member States, international organizations and other partners working to promote the attainment of Goal 16.

80. Liechtenstein strongly supported target 8.7 on the eradication of forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking. Slavery was big business, and the financial sector was well positioned to root out slavery-related activities hidden in corporate supply chains. Liechtenstein was analysing how it could use its expertise as a financial centre to assist global efforts to end slavery and human trafficking. It fully supported the Call to Action to End Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.

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President: Mr. Matjila (Vice-President) ..... (South Africa)

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In the absence of Ms. Chatardova (Czechia), Mr. Matjila (South Africa), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 5: High-level segment (*continued*) (E/2018/61)

(a) Ministerial meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (*continued*) (E/2018/64)

General debate (*continued*)

1. **The President** invited the ministerial meeting to resume its general debate on the theme "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies".

2. **Mr. Aseradens** (Latvia), Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Economics, said that, during the 2018 session of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, Latvia had presented its first voluntary national review, which had been prepared in close cooperation with non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders. His Government sought to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals in development planning and budgeting. The long-term sustainable development strategy, created in 2010, emphasized the importance of people, nature, digitalization and culture. The Government was also working to prepare a new post-2020 national development plan to address the challenges that had been identified by the voluntary national review and would hold open, nationwide discussions on future targets and measures in that connection.

3. Sustainability challenges included transitioning to a more innovative and eco-efficient economy that provided equal opportunities for all people, in both rural and urban settings, to lead better lives. The structural causes of poverty, social exclusion and socioeconomic inequality must therefore be eliminated. As economic growth increased and technologies advanced, it was important to ensure that economies were inclusive by connecting more people to better jobs, providing enabling support, in particular to youth, and offering sufficient social protection. International competition in the labour force and insufficient domestic income opportunities impacted resiliency, economic growth and competitiveness. As a result, one Latvian entrepreneur had designed a website to publish competitive work offers from companies that were willing and able to provide attractive jobs and salaries to emigrants who wished to return. In order to promote innovation and the circular economy, the Government planned to increase investments in research and development, achieve 40 per cent renewable energy consumption by 2020 and halve energy consumption relative to gross domestic product by 2030. In addition, a legally binding circular economy implementation tool had been developed.

4. The success of the 2030 Agenda depended on the willingness of all States to work together to address challenges, including income inequality, migration patterns, climate change and the increasingly unstable global economic and political environment. The international community must strengthen its cooperation with all stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, and the cross-cutting principles of the 2030 Agenda, particularly human rights and gender equality, should continue to guide efforts to achieve common goals. The United Nations played a crucial role in supporting Member States, and Latvia fully supported the ambitious reform of the United Nations development system.

5. **Mr. Tiilikainen** (Finland), Minister of the Environment, Energy and Housing, said that adjusting human activity to respect the limits of the Earth's capacity was a prerequisite for the well-being of societies and economies. Countries must therefore move to a circular economy. Finland was strongly committed to the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and was determined to be carbon neutral by 2045. Its national circular economy road map included more than 60 concrete measures for circularity and resource efficiency.

6. To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, policies must be coherent and recognize their interlinkages. The achievement of Goal 6 on water would require more strategic dialogue among the Member States and stakeholders at the United Nations. Furthermore, gender equality, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, was paramount, as countries could not reach their full potential without empowering women and girls. While Governments must take the lead in implementing the 2030 Agenda, all stakeholders must participate, including civil society, academia, indigenous peoples, children and youth, the private sector, municipalities and regions. At the national level, over 850 operational commitments to sustainable development had been made by a number of stakeholders, many from private companies. The enormous potential of science, technology and innovation needed to be harnessed to advance sustainable development worldwide. In that connection, his Government was proud to host the new United Nations Technology Innovation Labs.

7. Finland had presented its first voluntary national review in 2016 and planned to present its second in 2020. Beginning in 2019, the national budget would include an integrated description of financial resources allocated to implement the 2030 Agenda, which was an important step in mainstreaming the Goals into all sectoral policies and financial resources. In addition, 50 national sustainable development indicators were used to monitor progress towards the Goals, and the participatory follow-up mechanism provided an opportunity to bring data, trends and challenges into wider public discussions.

8. As the current Chair of the Arctic Council, Finland had chosen to focus on climate change and the 2030 Agenda. The melting of ice and snow in the Arctic amplified the global impacts of climate change and the importance of resilient and sustainable societies.

9. **Mr. Masagos** (Singapore), Minister of Environment and Water Resources, said that the 2030 Agenda provided a framework for national action and international partnership to transform lives. Elected officials must take ownership of the Agenda and work in partnership with citizens, businesses and the international community. In Singapore, people had always been at the centre of development policies. The country's economic transformation had improved lives by providing quality education, health, housing, employment and a clean environment. The Government took a pragmatic approach to policymaking and governance, focusing on outcomes rather than ideology, to foster a harmonious, inclusive and prosperous society.

10. Despite constraints as both a small island developing State and a highly urbanized and densely populated city-State, Singapore had pursued sustainable development since its independence. Economic development had always been balanced with environmental protection and social inclusion. In 2019, the Government would implement an economy-wide carbon tax, without exception, in order to accelerate innovation and energy efficiency and move towards a sustainable, low-carbon future. In addition, the Government pursued a long-term, integrated approach to policy planning and implementation. Given that Singapore was one of the world's most water-stressed countries, significant investments had been made to ensure water resilience and sustainability. As a result, the country benefited from a diversified water supply, relying on imported water, local catchments, desalination and recycled wastewater. Furthermore, policy development and implementation were underpinned by collaborative multi-stakeholder partnerships. The Government had designated 2018 as the year of climate action to increase awareness of climate change, and nearly 250,000 citizens, corporations and civil society organizations had pledged to reduce their carbon footprint.

11. Singapore was strongly committed to partnering with and assisting other countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Nearly 120,000 officials from developing countries had received training under the Singapore Cooperation Programme, which had been established in 1992 to share development experiences. The Sustainable Development Goals represented the collective aspirations of the global community, and their unprecedented ambition and scale required its unwavering commitment. Singapore would therefore continue to work with its friends and partners to improve the lives of people around the world.

12. **Ms. Molewa** (South Africa), Minister of Environmental Affairs, said that ensuring just and inclusive sustainable development required multilateral solutions and collective action by all countries, sectors and actors at the national and international levels.

13. South Africa faced several development challenges. For example, water, agriculture, food and energy systems were vulnerable to climate change; by 2050, 80 per cent of the population would be living in urban areas; and, if not planned for, the current unsustainable consumption and production patterns, together with technological innovations, would profoundly disrupt socioeconomic, labour and industrial systems. The national development plan therefore prioritized addressing poverty, inequality and unemployment while fully integrating sustainable development into policy and programme objectives. Furthermore, the integrated urban development framework policy aimed to promote social inclusion, economic development, climate resilience and the protection of environmental resources. It was fully aligned with existing policies associated with water and sanitation, a diversified and secure energy system, sustainable public transport and a circular waste economy.

14. To achieve a just transition to sustainable development on a global scale, all stakeholders must be fully committed to the means of implementation, as outlined in the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 17, particularly with regard to finance, capacity-building and technical support. The international community must therefore focus on resolving global sustainable development and humanitarian challenges without conflating them with security issues. States must meet the expectations of the Doha Development Agenda, address illicit financial

flows and issues relating to intellectual property and fulfil commitments to allocate 0.7 per cent of gross national income to official development assistance. South Africa reiterated the primacy of multilateralism in advancing the sustainable development agenda.

15. **Mr. Moir Sandoval** (Guatemala), Secretary of Planning and Programming, said that, in June 2018, a volcanic eruption in Guatemala had caused loss of life and over 1.6 billion quetzales in damage to the social and productive infrastructure. While support provided by other countries had complemented national recovery efforts, the disaster had demonstrated that highly vulnerable countries were constantly exposed to risks associated with natural phenomena and climate change and must transition to more sustainable and resilient societies.

16. The Government had made progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda by adapting the Sustainable Development Goals to the national and subnational contexts through an inclusive participatory process. National priorities included strengthening efforts to reduce poverty and extreme poverty; reducing chronic malnutrition, the unemployment rate and inequality; and improving health, education and environmental protection, while strictly respecting human rights.

17. With regard to water and natural resources, 75 per cent of the population had been registered as having access to drinking water in 2014. Nevertheless, more effort was needed to reach 90 per cent by 2032, in line with Goal 6. The Government was committed to comprehensive water management, and the regulatory framework would accelerate progress in guaranteeing water protection, security and supply. Forest area in Guatemala had been 33.7 per cent of land area in 2012, reflecting a loss of over 4 per cent in the preceding 10 years. It was therefore important to employ reforestation techniques using native non-invasive species, and the contributions of civil society organizations with ancestral traditions of conservation could play a significant role in that regard.

18. With respect to affordable and accessible energy, 90 per cent of the country had access to electricity in 2017. Nevertheless, the Government faced challenges in increasing coverage to rural areas, where firewood remained the primary energy source.

19. While the percentage of the urban population living in slums had appeared to decrease, the actual number of people had increased. As a result, land-use planning was being promoted at the local level. The Government had also suggested reviewing Goal 11 in order to prevent poor cities from cropping up on the outskirts of cities and to assess the interdependence of urban and rural areas.

20. With the support of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Government had adapted the 2030 Agenda to national development plans. The Commission also facilitated the exchange of experiences that were relevant to the specific needs of the region. Furthermore, the United Nations Development Programme had provided support during national dialogues aimed at increasing ownership and strengthening institutions, with a focus on innovation and technology.

21. **Mr. Da Silva Gonçalves** (Cabo Verde), Minister for Tourism and Transport and Minister for Maritime Economy, said that, while it had been three years since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, discussions on the means of implementation still faced considerable roadblocks. Cabo Verde remained firmly committed to implementing its own national development agenda through its sustainable development plan for the period 2017–2021, which was aligned with the 2030 Agenda with a view to building resilience and focusing on the most vulnerable groups to ensure that no one was left behind. Cabo Verde had presented its voluntary national review during the current session of the high-level political forum.

22. In 2008, Cabo Verde had graduated from a least developed country to a lower-middle-income country and had met most of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. In order to consolidate those gains and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the Government would continue to invest in human capital, good governance, justice, energy, health, education, water and sanitation. To promote economic growth and opportunities, the Government was further strengthening its policies and regulatory framework to encourage private investment in key sectors, including tourism, the blue economy, renewable energy and exports of goods and services. It also prioritized the mobilization and effective use of national resources and encouraged entrepreneurship and investment, with an emphasis on women and youth.

23. Nevertheless, as a small island developing State facing severe economic and environmental constraints, national efforts were not sufficient to meet the country's financing needs. The international community must therefore be willing to help fill the financial gap for countries like Cabo Verde. Funding modalities prescribed by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda remained a critical issue for the timely implementation of the 2030

Agenda. The special circumstances of individual countries needed to be taken into account at both the national and international levels. For many States, limited capacity for mobilization and the lack of availability of international funding remained major obstacles to securing the necessary resources to promote national development. Bilateral and multilateral development partners must engage in dialogue to pursue creative solutions to overcome those obstacles, and the United Nations system and other international partners must continue to provide support to mobilize both traditional and non-traditional sources of funding to complement national efforts. Furthermore, there must be a harmonized system to classify countries using clear eligibility criteria.

24. **Mr. Dorji** (Bhutan), Minister of Finance, said that Bhutan accorded the highest priority to implementing the 2030 Agenda, as was evidenced by its participation in the voluntary national review. The Agenda was consistent with his country's national development model, which sought to ensure that peace, happiness and the well-being of people remained at the core of all socioeconomic development efforts. Bhutan had aligned the relevant targets of the Sustainable Development Goals with national plans, including the current five-year national development plan.

25. Bhutan had made considerable progress towards its long-term vision of a just and harmonious society. In keeping with its commitment to leave no one behind, the Government had reduced multidimensional poverty by 5.8 per cent, had maintained income inequality at 0.38 per cent, had achieved 100 per cent school enrolment and had increased access to improved water sources for over 99 per cent of households. Despite those achievements, Bhutan faced challenges stemming from demographic change, pressure on natural resources, economic vulnerability, the impacts of climate change and limited technological progress.

26. As a landlocked least developed country in the Himalayas, Bhutan was vulnerable to earthquakes and severely impacted by climate change. The Government had therefore implemented relevant policies, regulations, strategies and action plans. For example, the Constitution mandated a minimum forest cover of 60 per cent as part of the national commitment to carbon neutrality. The Government had also launched an ambitious initiative to provide sustained financing to maintain protected areas and biological corridors.

27. The international community must come together in mobilizing adequate and predictable financial resources for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Bhutan looked forward to receiving support from its development partners, including civil society and the private sector, in order to make progress in that regard.

28. **Mr. Kiisler** (Estonia), Minister of Environment, said that people and their actions significantly impacted the environment. Larger populations increased consumption, and solid waste generation rates were on pace to exceed 11 million tons per day by 2100. While production systems contributed to human well-being, they should not put undue pressure on the environment. Responsible consumption and lifestyle choices could play a key role in ending environmental degradation. Strong will could also have a significant impact. In 2008, under the "Let's Do It!" campaign, 50,000 people across Estonia had voluntarily come together to clean up the entire country within five hours. On 15 September 2018, people from 150 countries would participate in World Cleanup Day, which was becoming the largest global civic action in human history. He invited everyone to take part and contribute to a cleaner environment.

29. As a driver of change, technological innovation had both positive and negative effects on the environment. For example, motor vehicles and electricity had been two of the most important technological breakthroughs of the twentieth century, but they had had unintended consequences. In contrast, renewable energy and information and communications technologies were helping to address climate change and pollution, increase productivity and reduce material consumption. New innovative technologies, including big data, blockchain and artificial intelligence, improved human well-being and economic growth without harming the environment. Estonia was the first country to use blockchain on a national scale to ensure that networks, systems and data could not be compromised, while retaining 100 per cent data privacy. That technology helped to exchange and store data securely and transparently in areas such as supply chain management, recycling and energy.

30. **Mr. Mejía Alzate** (Colombia), Minister of National Planning, said that, as a result of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, sustainable development was included in agendas at all levels. With few exceptions, Governments, companies and social organizations had strengthened commitments and efforts in that connection. Colombia had ratified the Paris Agreement and had recently presented its second voluntary national review at the high-level political forum, thereby reaffirming its commitment to multilateralism.

31. While poverty and extreme poverty rates had fallen to historic lows in Colombia and throughout the

world, persistent poverty among youth and minority groups, as well as in some subregions within countries, continued to give cause for concern. A stronger effort must therefore be made to close the gap, both between and within countries. Peace and sustainable development went hand in hand. The historic peace agreement signed by Colombia would allow his Government to focus on improving the lives of its citizens, strengthening institutions, building a more productive economy, and ensuring the protection and responsible use of natural resources. The best way to overcome conflicts and prevent outbreaks of violence was to provide opportunities to all people, wherever they were.

32. In joining the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Colombia would continue to improve public policies and accelerate its transition to sustainable development. The Government had developed policy guidelines to promote innovation as the transformative tool that would help to prepare for future challenges. In order to protect natural resources, the international community must accelerate structural change in economies. A green growth strategy would help to focus efforts on productivity and competitiveness.

33. Like the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, countries were interrelated and interdependent. Goal 17 rightly noted that the 2030 Agenda could only be achieved with genuine global partnership. Sustainable development was not a zero-sum game; cooperation, openness, solidarity and generosity were key to building a better present and future for humanity.

34. **Ms. Dostálová** (Czechia), Minister for Regional Development, said that the high-level political forum was crucial to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and there should be increased accountability and stakeholder engagement in its review processes. Regional forums organized by the United Nations economic commissions served as excellent preparatory platforms for the detailed sharing of good practices.

35. With regard to Sustainable Development Goal 15 on life on land, government policies covered all important aspects of terrestrial ecosystem protection, and more than 20 per cent of the territory fell within protected areas. Concerning Goal 6 on clean water and sanitation, her Government was focused on improving water retention in the landscape and rainwater use in households. With respect to Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities, it had introduced a secondary raw materials policy to conserve primary resources, save energy and reduce waste. An integrated approach was applied to urban development, involving various partners at all levels, and the Government cooperated closely with municipalities on affordable social housing. In addition, an increasing number of municipalities were engaged in the local Agenda 21.

36. The Czech Republic supported the smart cities concept with a view to providing new possibilities for building sustainable, liveable and resilient communities. For that reason it had initiated a special meeting of the Council on achieving a transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies, given that sound governance and the participation of all in relevant decision-making processes were crucial to achieving that goal.

37. **Mr. Malmierca Díaz** (Cuba), Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment, said that, three years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, global inequality and polarization persisted and were worsening. The concentration of income and wealth in developed countries contrasted with the underdevelopment and poverty experienced by two thirds of the world's population. The resources to address those scourges existed, as was evidenced by the millions of dollars spent on annual military expenditures globally. However, the most powerful States lacked the political will to fulfil their international commitments. There must be a new world order based on justice, equity and peace. His Government rejected unilateral solutions and attempts to undermine existing multilateral mechanisms. Furthermore, industrialized countries must accept their historic debt and abide by the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. The achievement of the right to development could no longer be postponed.

38. The devastating impact of the environmental crisis, particularly on developing countries and small island States, continued to pose a serious threat to the very existence of the human species. No country should unilaterally renounce its common international responsibility or forget its ecological debt to humanity and future generations. The international community must consolidate genuine, effective global partnership for development in order to mobilize the resources needed to implement the 2030 Agenda.

39. Given its geographical location, Cuba was highly vulnerable to climate change. As a result, government policies at all levels prioritized the achievement of prosperous and sustainable development with a focus on the human being. However, the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the Government of the United States on Cuba for nearly 60 years caused deprivations for the Cuban people and was the main obstacle to the country's economic development and to

the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Despite those circumstances, the Government was drafting a national social and economic development plan through 2030, which prioritized the issues included in the 2030 Agenda and, in some cases, set more ambitious goals. People from all sectors of the population had participated in related discussions.

40. Internationalism, humanism and solidarity guided Cuban foreign policy, and the country continued to share its limited resources with other countries, having implemented cooperation programmes in 157 countries in areas including health, education and sports. In addition, tens of thousands of Cuban health workers provided services in 65 countries. Cuba reiterated its full commitment to implementing the 2030 Agenda and working toward a more just, equitable, inclusive and resilient world.

41. **Mr. Hamid** (Sudan), Minister of Physical Planning for Khartoum State, said that his Government reiterated its commitment to implementing the 2030 Agenda. With regard to Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities, the Sudan set aside 70 per cent of land for housing, in both urban and rural areas. A national housing project had been adopted in 2010 to ensure appropriate, dignified housing for all families, including impoverished and women-headed households. The Government had also established a fund, which operated in all provinces, to provide credit to support dignified housing.

42. The Sudan hosted a number of migrants and refugees, providing them with essential services, and the Government had established regional and international partnerships to combat human trafficking. With regard to internal displacement, it sought to provide resources to support development projects in rural settings, as well as microfinancing and financing for small businesses to improve living conditions and stability so that people could remain in their area of origin.

43. With regard to Goal 6 on water and sanitation, the Government endeavoured to provide drinking water, including through rainwater collection in rural areas. Improvements had also been made to sewer systems and related infrastructure, and garbage was being collected in markets. With regard to Goal 7, the Government was working to provide clean sources of energy by damming rivers. In connection with Goal 15, a law governing environmental protection had been adopted in 2017 to protect biodiversity, combat desertification and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

44. **Mr. Famellos** (Greece), Alternate Minister of Environment and Energy, said that his country was strongly committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda, which provided a new vision for open, responsive and accountable governance and inclusive institutions and societies. The guiding principle of leaving no one behind was at the core of national priorities and shaped policies at all levels. Greece had been hit hard not only by the economic crisis eight years earlier but also by more recent humanitarian refugee crisis. The 2030 Agenda provided a road map that would heal the wounds caused by austerity measures and allow the country to focus on economic policies that contributed to achieving sustainable development. A new social agreement was therefore necessary. The Sustainable Development Goals served as a blueprint for the values that his Government wished to promote at the international level.

45. During the current session of the high-level political forum Greece had presented its first voluntary national review, which had been prepared with the involvement of all government agencies and stakeholder groups. During that process, the Government had seen that more could be achieved by working together and breaking down silos. Greece had achieved most of the Goal 6 targets on water and sanitation. Water management principles were applied at the national level and served to improve cooperation across borders. The Government had also taken bold initiatives to promote peace, stability and progress in the Balkan region.

46. With regard to Goal 7, combating energy poverty and increasing renewables were of particular importance to fostering social cohesion and inclusion, and contributed to achieving the objectives of the Paris Agreement, to which Greece remained firmly committed. Furthermore, efforts to make cities inclusive and resilient had multiple benefits in terms of climate action. The transition to a low-carbon, resource-efficient and circular economy was paramount to ensuring environmental protection, creating jobs, combatting unemployment and supporting innovation in waste management.

47. Concerning Goal 15, the Government incorporated biodiversity values and ecosystem services in decision-making in all sectors and had recently increased the country's protected areas, under the Natura 2000 network of the European Union, to approximately 28 per cent of land territory and 20 per cent of territorial waters. In the midst of the evolving humanitarian refugee crisis, the Government also promoted peace, religious tolerance and security across the eastern Mediterranean and South-Eastern Europe.

48. **Ms. Djukic Dejanovic** (Serbia), Minister without portfolio responsible for demography and population

policy, said that, following the 2017 presidential elections, her Government had set out to prioritize the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, adjusting them to the national context. An intersectoral working group had held preparatory and constitutive meetings and had begun to map the Goals. Serbia would therefore present its voluntary national review in 2019. The Government placed particular importance on aligning the Goals with the negotiating chapters of the European Union accession process. In that connection, the working group had met with representatives of the United Nations Istanbul regional hub for the third time in February 2018.

49. Given the need for timely access to high-quality data at all levels, the national statistical office had organized a four-day workshop in June 2018 to map the Goal indicators. In partnership with the German Agency for International Cooperation, the Ministry of Finance had launched a project entitled "public finance reform — financing the 2030 Agenda" in order to increase the visibility of the Goals. In September 2018, Serbia would host a subregional conference to promote progress on the 2030 Agenda, which would follow the United Nations mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support strategy. A government focus group had organized a regional seminar on the Goals for parliaments from Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia in May 2018. The Government strongly emphasized the importance of Goal 16, on peaceful and inclusive societies, and Goal 17, on partnerships, and therefore cooperated closely with the United Nations country team and the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Serbia.

50. **Ms. Skog** (Sweden), Minister of Environment, said that her country was in a good position to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Its peaceful and democratic conditions, international cooperation and dynamic business climate had created a strong foundation for sustainable development and welfare. The Government continued to value good governance, the rule of law, democracy, gender equality, sexual and reproductive health rights, peace and inclusive societies. Nevertheless, there was still much to be done before Sweden could become truly sustainable, especially with regard to transforming consumption patterns, shifting means of transportation and strengthening ecosystems.

51. Addressing the issue of chemicals and waste was at the core of implementing the 2030 Agenda. Harmful chemicals spread with global trade, endangering lives and the planet. In response, Sweden had partnered with a group of States to launch a high-level alliance for a global agreement on chemicals and waste. Increased knowledge and information throughout the entire value chain, as well as non-toxic material cycles, were key to achieving a circular economy. The management of chemicals and waste must change alongside global trade.

52. Water was a shared resource and a shared responsibility. Currently, more than 800 million people lived without safe drinking water and proper sanitation, and climate change was impacting access to water and marine resources. Improved cooperation was urgently needed to protect the quality and quantity of water and prevent conflicts, especially disputes over transboundary waters.

53. There were real security risks associated with climate change. Sweden had recently organized a debate in the Security Council on climate and security, and in 2017, Sweden and Fiji had hosted the historic United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. Work had begun on implementing the commitments made, and Sweden would continue to lead efforts to save the oceans.

54. Lastly, she underlined the importance of new partnerships between the public and private sectors and with civil society, as well as the role of youth in creating better conditions for people to live sustainable lives.

55. **Ms. Ubach Font** (Andorra), Minister of Foreign Affairs, said that, while significant progress had been made in implementing the 2030 Agenda, the international community must be mindful of the fragility of its achievements. Climate change, inequalities, extreme poverty and environmental degradation were just some of the risk factors that directly impacted development capacities. It was therefore imperative to incorporate resilience into development policies.

56. Andorra had a population of 80,000 people but was visited by 8 million tourists every year. Her Government, alongside local authorities, strove to balance sustainability and economic development in an economy that was based mainly on tourism and trade. In line with Sustainable Development Goal 11 on sustainable cities, it had invested in renewable energies and had improved energy efficiency. Environmental awareness among the Andorran people facilitated policies that protected the environment while allowing access to protected areas in order to provide both a high quality of life for citizens and a tourist attraction that encouraged economic development.

57. The Government had conducted national information campaigns and awareness-raising campaigns on mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda in order

to change societal behaviours, with a focus on instilling good practices from early childhood to create a multiplier effect. In that connection, the Government was strongly committed to providing quality education that took into consideration both students and teachers, in line with Goal 4. The education system was competency-based, and respect for inclusion, human rights, diversity and a culture of peace was fundamental. Given that education for democratic citizenship laid strong foundations for resilient societies, the Government also prioritized education in its development cooperation plan.

58. The first voluntary national review of Andorra, presented at the high-level political forum in 2018, had been prepared in collaboration with civil society and the private sector. Similarly, partnerships must be established to implement the 2030 Agenda and involve all stakeholders. In a world that was more interconnected than ever, Andorra would remain committed to the work of the United Nations, as it was only through multilateralism that solutions could and should be found.

59. **Mr. Gertze** (Namibia), Permanent Representative of Namibia to the United Nations, said that, following its independence, his country had worked to create a united nation and governance structure that moved away from serving a small, privileged minority and took care of the majority of its people, which meant addressing the debilitating effects of the country's colonial legacy by combating poverty, promoting education and providing clean water and sanitation.

60. With regard to Sustainable Development Goal 6, most of the targets on access to clean water had been met. However, only 54 per cent of households had access to improved sanitation. As a result, his Government was scaling up public investment in sanitation infrastructure and promoting behavioural change regarding hygiene and open defecation. In connection with Goal 7 on energy, 50.4 per cent of households had access to electricity. The Government was committed to increasing investments in renewables, especially solar energy, and called on partners to collaborate on relevant initiatives.

61. With regard to Goal 11 on sustainable cities, skewed land ownership and a lack of serviced land made housing a challenge and resulted in expanding slums on urban peripheries. The Government was accelerating the provision of housing through public-private partnerships and by sourcing financial resources for rural housing initiatives. Furthermore, the Central Bank of Namibia had instituted measures to curb speculation and stabilize the housing market.

62. Concerning Goal 15 on life on land, Namibia had played a leading role in conceptualizing desertification, land degradation and drought and co-chaired the related Group of Friends. Those issues greatly impacted his Government's ability to improve food security. Namibia also continued to champion community participation in the management and conservation of natural resources.

63. Despite the significant progress made under Goal 17 on partnerships, as an upper-middle-income country, Namibia was unable to access much-needed resources. The categorization was misleading, as it was based on gross domestic product per capita and did not take into consideration the highly skewed nature of wealth distribution, reflected in its Gini coefficient. He therefore invited participants to join his Government in a smart, multi-stakeholder partnership to eradicate poverty and ensure that no one was left behind.

64. **Mr. Razafimahefa** (Madagascar), Minister for Internal Affairs and Decentralization, said that he wished to highlight local development, given that local communities played a decisive role in implementing the 2030 Agenda. With regard to resource mobilization, Madagascar had organized a symposium on local financing for francophone countries in sub-Saharan Africa in 2017, which had aimed to explore innovative approaches to increasing national resources and financing for the Sustainable Development Goals, in line with legislative frameworks and participatory budgeting practices. It had also examined the recommendations of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and initiatives to increase national resources. Furthermore, his Government had worked to harmonize mechanisms to transfer finances to decentralized local authorities, and a national tax equalization fund had been established in 2017.

65. In terms of governance, Madagascar had endeavoured to institutionalize local consultative frameworks to ensure the participation and engagement of all stakeholders, including vulnerable populations, in preparing inclusive local development plans. The Government had also prepared a national strategy and programme on local development, which served as the framework for providing assistance and coordinating and localizing relevant sectoral policies. It had also adopted a law governing public-private partnership in 2015 and had created an organization to attend international meetings on decentralized cooperation with a view to promoting economic exchanges between communities. In addition, training modules for local stakeholders were being created to boost local potential. Madagascar was also conducting a study on establishing local governments and had drafted a charter on

decentralization, with a view to improving the coordination of support services.

66. Multilateralism played a key role in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Madagascar therefore welcomed the reform of the United Nations development system, which would strengthen the role of resident coordinators, emphasize national priorities at the local level and ensure that international actions were adapted to national contexts.

67. **Mr. Al-Fayez** (Jordan), Minister of Environment, said that a number of countries had expressed a commitment to full ownership and institutionalization of the Sustainable Development Goals and had shared invaluable lessons learned and experiences during the high-level political forum. For decades, Jordan had demonstrated how investments in human resources and development could translate into prosperity and welfare for all citizens. His Government was setting an example in resilience, by providing for its own citizens as well as the Syrian refugees whom it hosted. The regional crisis and the influx of refugees seeking safety and security in Jordan had strained its limited natural resources, infrastructure, utilities and public institutions. Despite those challenges, Jordan had joined the international community in advancing the 2030 Agenda, having submitted its voluntary national review in 2017.

68. In Jordan, a resilient and prosperous society meant sustaining peace and security, safeguarding development gains, systematically working to reduce all forms of inequality and empowering women and youth. As one of the most water-scarce countries in the world, the water supply was prioritized for human consumption. The country had been able to maintain the security of its energy supply by diversifying sources of imported energy, developing local and renewable energy resources, rationalizing energy consumption and improving efficiency, all of which had significantly contributed to reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Particular attention had been given to improving the resilience of refugee and host communities by implementing energy conservation projects in public institutions, particularly in response to the rising demand for health and education services. Furthermore, the Government had developed a national strategy and action plan for sustainable consumption and production for the period 2016–2025 in the transport, waste management, agriculture and food sectors. The protection and sustainable management of territorial ecosystems remained one of the core environmental objectives for the country, which had received international recognition for successfully preserving its rangeland.

69. More coordinated partnership involving national Governments, donors, multinational institutions, the private sector and civil society organizations must fill the gap in development financing. His Government was committed to working with partners to identify effective financing models to fulfil the ambitions of the Addis Ababa framework. Furthermore, the international community must take into account national contexts in determining Sustainable Development Goals and targets, the means of implementation and indicators to measure and monitor progress. Success would depend as much on the effectiveness of international partnerships as on the ability to translate the Goals into tangible outcomes for cities and societies.

70. **Mr. Chiteme** (Zambia), Minister of Development Planning, said that the seventh national development plan of Zambia had been premised on the principles of sustainable development, integrating approximately 86 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goal targets. Access to water and sanitation services by all segments of the population was critical to eradicating poverty and vulnerabilities, reducing developmental inequalities and enhancing human development. In Zambia, the number of households with access to improved sources of drinking water had increased to 67.7 per cent. In order to address the high rates of sanitation- and hygiene-related morbidity and mortality, especially in rural areas, the Government was implementing a programme to increase the use of improved sanitation facilities and reduce diarrheal diseases among children.

71. With regard to Goal 7, his Government sought to achieve 6 per cent renewable energy by 2021 and 15 per cent by 2030, with a view to diversifying the energy mix and reducing greenhouse gas emissions and overdependency on hydro-powered energy.

72. In connection with Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities, the Government had prioritized decentralization reforms to promote localized governance and planning systems. In order to address the proliferation of slums stemming from rapid urbanization, the Government had implemented a pilot programme to upgrade slums in Lusaka and Copperbelt, with a focus on enhancing access to clean water sources and improved sanitation.

73. Concerning Goal 15, the Government was implementing measures to support rural communities in better managing local resources, with a view to reducing deforestation and unsustainable agriculture expansion, enhancing benefits from agriculture and wildlife and addressing vulnerabilities to climate change. An initiative to plant 1 million trees had also been launched

in an effort to restore ecosystems, promote biodiversity and contribute to economic growth and diversification through sustainable forest use and management.

74. Reporting on the Goals required timely, reliable disaggregated data. The Government was therefore building the capacity of the central statistics office by strengthening the legal framework to support the production of comprehensive statistics. Achieving the Goals also required predictable access to financing, and he appealed to developed countries to honour their commitments in that regard.

75. **Ms. Tunis** (Sierra Leone), Minister of Planning and Economic Development, said that the political atmosphere in Sierra Leone had significantly improved. In April 2018, general elections had been successfully concluded with the peaceful transfer of power from one political party to another. Development partners, including the United Nations, international financial institutions, bilateral agencies and non-governmental organizations, had helped to transform the economy and build resilient systems. President Bio had committed to a new direction agenda which was aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and the principle of leaving no one behind. The agenda prioritized education, justice, peace and security, and the fight against corruption and illicit financial flows. Her Government was also pursuing an education for development agenda to promote free primary and secondary education, with a focus on the girl child and women's empowerment as a means of addressing the development needs of present and future generations.

76. Following the establishment of a legal aid board to promote justice for the poor, in line with Goal 16, access to legal representation had increased threefold between 2015 and 2017. In addition, the ongoing constitutional review process was addressing a number of issues related to justice, inclusion, peace, security and general service delivery. With regard to Sustainable Development Goal 4, the proportion of children with disabilities enrolled in primary school had increased from 0.48 per cent in 2013 to 26.6 per cent in 2017. In connection with Goals 13, 14 and 15, the national environmental protection agency had implemented recommendations from environmental impact assessments, and the Government had increased the number of environmental officers in key ministries, departments and agencies, as well as the number of district councils trained in environmental issues. In partnership with local businesses, the Government was exploring innovative and affordable housing solutions that used waste plastics and wood in construction, with a view to protecting the environment. Given that disaggregated data was essential to leaving no one behind, the national statistics office had established a fully functional gender unit with assistance from development partners. The Government had also launched a new report on child poverty, which served as a baseline to monitor child deprivation, in line with Goal 1.

77. **Ms. Kim** Eun-kyung (Republic of Korea), Minister of Environment, said that the current Administration had been receiving international attention for fostering peace on the Korean Peninsula and in North-East Asia. Her Government had also taken steps to improve sustainability and resiliency at the national level. For example, with regard to Sustainable Development Goal 6 on clean water and sanitation, in 2017 the Government had opened artificial reservoirs to address algal blooms, resulting in signs of river ecosystem recovery. Offices dedicated to managing water quality and quantity had been restructured to facilitate the integrated sustainable management of water resources. In connection with Goal 7 on affordable and clean energy, the Government had announced a new energy road map to expand renewable energy to 20 per cent by 2030 and end reliance on nuclear and coal energy sources, which accounted for 30 per cent and 35 per cent of electricity, respectively.

78. With regard to Goal 11 on sustainable cities, an urban regeneration programme had been launched to address ageing cities. Long-term, comprehensive recycling measures were being planned to reduce plastic use under Goal 12 on responsible consumption. The Government had also introduced an initiative to preserve natural capital and help relieve pressure on natural resources, in connection with Goal 15.

79. Concerning Goal 17 on partnerships, the Government was working with 23 relevant ministries and 420 experts to incorporate the Goals into its national vision. To promote participation at all levels of society, it had adopted the high-level political forum coordination mechanism for major groups and other stakeholders. In addition, the Republic of Korea participated actively in multinational discussions on sustainable societies and shared its experiences. It also collaborated with international organizations to provide support for climate change adaptation and to assist developing countries in better managing soil and preventing desertification.

80. **Mr. Gyan-Baffour** (Ghana), Minister of Planning, said that his Government had made significant strides in implementing the 2030 Agenda during the past two years; Ghanaians were living longer, more children were attending school and access to basic social services had improved. However, human development had been

uneven, and deprivations persisted. Widening inequalities, climate change and migration posed new development challenges.

81. With respect to water and sanitation, the Government was intensifying the implementation of the national water policy, the riparian buffer zone policy and the drinking water quality management framework. It was also mobilizing investments to improve infrastructure, establishing a water fund to support pro-poor pricing in urban water service delivery and scaling up the community-led total sanitation and rural sanitation model and strategy to improve household sanitation facilities.

82. Efforts were also being made to promote renewable energy, with the implementation of the Renewable Energy Act and the national energy policy. Under the Sustainable Energy for All initiative, Ghana had developed a country action plan and had implemented nationally determined contributions to prioritize sustainable energy security. The Government was also seeking to adopt a renewable energy master plan, with a view to increasing renewable energy by 10 per cent by 2030, promoting clean rural household lighting, expanding the adoption of market-based clean cooking solutions and doubling improvements in energy efficiency to 20 per cent in power plants.

83. The Ministry of Inner-City and Zongo Development had been created to address urban challenges, which included improving living conditions and socioeconomic activities in slums and inner cities. The Government was also developing initiatives to protect and promote the sustainable use of land-based resources, such as conserving mangrove forests and wetlands and mainstreaming biodiversity in development planning. Ghana reaffirmed its commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and implementing the Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

84. **Ms. Robinson-Regis** (Trinidad and Tobago), Minister of Planning and Development, said that, in order to lift humanity out of extreme poverty and steer the world onto a more sustainable and resilient path, the Sustainable Development Goals must be made relevant to the daily lives of all citizens. Accordingly, her Government had revised the 2002 national development strategy, which had been drafted with the participation of 600 representatives of Government and civil society, to bring it into line with the Goals. Under the revised strategy, Vision 2030, the Government advocated for a comprehensive, cross-cutting socioeconomic development framework and a whole-of-society approach that allowed all persons to lead healthy and productive lives.

85. The oil- and gas-based economy had made it possible to provide approximately 97 per cent of the population with access to electricity. The Government had also developed a sustainable energy road map. In addition, approximately 93 per cent of the population had access to pipe-borne water in homes and communities. To reach all 1.4 million people, the Government was developing a new national integrated water resources management policy. Furthermore, a number of government and non-government agencies had worked to develop a strong ecological code of conduct aimed at incorporating international commitments into national legislative frameworks in order to comply with international conventions and protect the country's rich biodiversity.

86. Trinidad and Tobago reaffirmed its commitment to partnering with the United Nations in working constructively towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In that connection, collaboration with the United Nations country team in Port of Spain had been invaluable. The Government remained unreservedly committed to ensuring that no one was left behind and would continue to work with all stakeholders in pursuit of sustainable development for all.

87. **Mr. Doubragne** (Chad), Minister of Economy and Development Planning, said that concerted follow-up was necessary to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 1 on eradicating poverty. Despite security, environmental and socioeconomic challenges, his Government had begun planning for medium- and long-term development in 2015. Following the approval in July 2017 of Vision 2030: The Chad We Want and the national development plan for 2017–2021, the Government had begun implementing the 2030 Agenda. The first voluntary national review was currently being prepared, with assistance from the United Nations Development Programme, and would be presented in 2019.

88. During a recent visit to Chad, the Deputy Secretary-General had noted that vulnerable populations in the Lake Chad region were profoundly affected by the barbaric attacks of Boko Haram, which had caused mass movements of people. More than 45 million people living around Lake Chad were also impacted by climate change. As Lake Chad dried up, their means of subsistence were severely limited, and their resilience capacities were hindered.

89. Despite unprecedented economic and financial hardships, the Government was obliged to devote its limited resources to national and subregional security efforts, rather than to the achievement of the Goals. It therefore called on its financial and technical partners to

fulfil their pledges to mobilize financial recourses to fund the national development plan, which had been made at the round table held in Paris in September 2017.

90. **Ms. Diallo** (Guinea), Minister of Planning and Economic Development, said that her Government was committed to implementing sectoral strategies and policies to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, as evidenced by its national socioeconomic development plan for the period 2016–2020 and by Guinea Vision 2040.

91. With regard to Goal 6 on water and sanitation, the Government aimed to expand services to provide drinking water in urban and rural areas, and to increase access from 69 per cent in 2016 to 76 per cent in 2020.

92. With regard to Goal 7 on clean, sustainable and affordable energy, the Government sought to ensure access to energy sources for the greatest number of people and to reduce dependence on fossil fuels by diversifying the energy mix and improving energy efficiency. In addition, the President of Guinea championed the development of renewable energies in Africa and was the coordinator of that initiative within the African Union.

93. With regard to Goal 17 on partnership, a meeting of the advisory group for the national socioeconomic development plan had been held in November 2017 in Paris, at which bilateral and multilateral partners, the private sector and civil society had overwhelmingly responded to requests for financing. She called on all partners to fulfil those pledges. The Government was also promoting new partnerships in order to diversify financing and obtain the resources necessary to achieve the Goals. However, progress could only be achieved by promoting governance and equitable justice, strengthening institutions and combating corruption.

94. **Mr. Harmon** (Guyana), Minister of State of the Ministry of the Presidency, said that transformation, sustainability and resilience were at the heart of national efforts to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. The Government was working to fully integrate the 2030 Agenda and other global and regional frameworks, including the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, into its overarching national development plan — the Green State Development Strategy. The Strategy provided a long-term vision for economic, social and environmental development to improve human well-being and social equity while significantly reducing environmental risks and preventing ecological scarcities.

95. Access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy was a challenge for Guyana. Despite being on the cusp of becoming an oil-producing nation, the country was committed to moving away from a situation of near-total reliance on fossil fuels to a clean and renewable energy supply by 2025. The Government was therefore strongly advocating for increased amounts of solar power in the energy mix, seeking membership in the International Solar Alliance and pursuing model partnerships with Italy and Norway. In addition, Guyana had maintained extremely low rates of deforestation, in accordance with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. It would host the seventeenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention in January 2019 and trusted that all Member States would participate. Although there was no substitute for nationally owned and led initiatives, partnership would remain indispensable.

96. **Mr. Almutawa** (Bahrain), Minister for Cabinet Affairs, said that, during the high-level political forum, Bahrain had organized three events with international partners that focused on affordable housing; entrepreneurship and innovation for sustainable development; and the management of migration for sustainable, inclusive and flexible societies. Bahrain had also presented its first voluntary national review, which had incorporated the results of consultations held with all stakeholders, including government officials, civil society organizations, the private sector and academia. Ministerial workshops had also been held to develop the work plan for 2019–2022. In order to monitor progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, the Government had created a national information committee and a database of indices and statistics. The national action plan included 78 per cent of the Goal targets; the others had already been incorporated elsewhere or did not apply to the national context.

97. As a small island developing State, Bahrain faced a number of development challenges, including limited resources and climate change. It was therefore necessary to engage in international partnerships, as was recommended in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. His Government hoped to see more forums that would mobilize financial resources to increase gains in sustainable development. The high-level political forum provided a space for Member States to exchange experiences and best practices in that regard.

98. **Mr. Guzmán Ortiz** (Mexico), Head of the Office of the President, said that the 2030 Agenda, the Paris

Agreement, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and the forthcoming Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration provided a road map to protect the planet and promote sustainable development for all of its inhabitants. The 2030 Agenda facilitated better public policies and international mechanisms that promoted horizontal coordination among Governments, vertical integration and the inclusion of all sectors of the population.

99. Mexico had presented its second voluntary national review at the current high-level political forum. Three years earlier, his Government had committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda and had since established the corresponding institutional architecture. The country was gradually making progress at the local level. While all officials, including those who had recently been elected, had committed to continuing those efforts, clusters and thematic approaches were not deemed the best way to comprehensively follow up on the Goals. Reform of the United Nations development system should uphold the indivisibility of the Goals.

100. With support from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Mexico had presided over the first two sessions of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, which had provided an opportunity to engage in dialogue and mutual learning and identify the main challenges, many of which they had in common. The related outcome document and agreed conclusions were important regional contributions to the work of the high-level political forum.

101. The deliberative function of the Council must be strengthened so that it could effectively monitor accountability and serve as a platform to exchange best practices and promote mutual learning. Mexico was pleased to note that the high-level political forum was examining the impact of exponential technologies, especially artificial intelligence, on all the Goals. It would continue to work towards developing a comprehensive approach to the 2030 Agenda within the forum, thereby preserving the indivisible nature of the Goals and targets.

102. **Mr. Nyongolo** (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Minister of the Environment and Sustainable Development, said that, with the use of an integrated rapid analysis tool, his Government had identified 38 targets and 58 indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals to be included in the national strategic development plan.

103. With regard to Goal 6, the Government had passed a law governing drinking water in 2015, and a number of projects were being undertaken to expand services. However, access remained below desired targets.

104. In connection with Goal 7 on energy, a law governing the electricity sector had been adopted in 2014 to facilitate access for public and private providers. Nevertheless, only approximately 19 per cent of the population had access to electricity. Under the national strategic development plan, the Government sought to raise that number to 50 per cent by 2022, 75 per cent by 2030 and 100 per cent by 2050. Hydropower facilities were also being built to meet that need.

105. With regard to Goal 11 on sustainable cities, the Government promoted public-private partnerships to address the challenge of providing adequate and affordable housing. It was also implementing reforms in the industrial sector to meet Goal 12 relating to responsible consumption and production.

106. Concerning Goal 15, the Democratic Republic of the Congo had 155 million hectares of forest cover, which was the second-largest forest on the planet, and protected areas encompassed 15 per cent of the territory. Since 2008, the Government had implemented a programme for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries. In addition, the national forest fund had been aligned with a list of special-purpose accounts, and a law on environmental protection had been adopted in 2011.

107. Lastly, with regard to Goal 17, some development programmes and projects required technical and financial assistance from partners, but efforts could be fragmented or spread too thin because of a lack of financing or coordination. Despite several initiatives that had achieved tangible results, there was still a need to improve public-private partnerships. His Government relied on support from its partners to mobilize the financial and technological resources necessary to achieve the Goals.

108. **Mr. Bergman** (Argentina), Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, said that his Government reaffirmed its commitment to follow up on its voluntary national reviews. Argentina was a candidate country to join the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, had a trade agreement with the European Union, was a signatory of the Paris Agreement and had committed to the 2030 Agenda.

109. Argentina was leading the transformation required to achieve sustainable development. Technical changes were necessary to move from a linear to a circular economy and sustainably use resources. There must also be a change in governance, in moving from vertical to

circular leadership. Sustainability was a human right, and the Government worked to promote dignity and a high quality of life for all people, without distinction.

110. With regard to the private sector, the international community must ensure that unsustainable practices were not profitable. It must also take up a new narrative: there was only one planet, a common home to the one human family. To that end, human rights must be incorporated into national policies.

111. **Ms. Agosto** (Argentina), Executive Secretary of the National Council for the Coordination of Social Policies, said that Argentina had begun the process of aligning the 2030 Agenda with its national priorities in December 2015 and had presented its first voluntary national review in 2017. As a follow-up, Argentina had presented its first country report in June 2018, which had been drafted by a number of government agencies whose different viewpoints helped to shape sustainable development in the country. The report had also identified challenges and made recommendations for public policy and therefore served a useful monitoring tool at the national level.

112. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda must take into account the capacities and priorities of each State in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. While States must be primarily responsible for incorporating global commitments into national contexts, they could only be successful by partnering with national and international actors, including subnational governments, the private sector, civil society, academia and international organizations. Global commitments in financing, cooperation, capacity-building and technology transfer were therefore crucial, especially for developing countries.

113. For its presidency of the Group of 20, Argentina had chosen sustainable development as the primary focus of the 2018 agenda, which also emphasized concerns regarding inequality. The international community must further strengthen efforts in economic, social and environmental development to ensure that prosperity was shared broadly and equitably, and that growth was inclusive.

114. **Ms. Devakula** (Thailand), Special Envoy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, said that strong nations were made up of resilient communities of people who believed in the values of betterment and sustainable development. In order to better achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, her Government sought to raise awareness and change behaviours among its citizens, as well as promote science, technology and innovation. Under its national development policy, the Government was working to achieve a self-sufficient economy and implement its structural policy. All people must be engaged in implementing the 2030 Agenda, which meant that integrated efforts and partnerships were crucial to achieving the Goals. The progress made by Thailand in achieving the Goals could be viewed on its website.

115. The recent ordeal in Thailand, in which 12 boys and their football coach had been trapped in a cave by flash flooding caused by climate change, had exemplified how humanity could combine its forces to overcome the obstacles that hindered the achievement of the Goals. Thanks to global partnerships and the use of science, technology and innovation, the boys had been rescued. She expressed her country's profound appreciation to all the people around the world who had supported and cooperated with her Government.

116. **Mr. Oduber** (Netherlands), Vice-Prime Minister of the Government of Aruba, said that his country strongly supported the ambitious reform agenda of the Secretary-General and was committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda, both at home and abroad.

117. The Kingdom of the Netherlands was made up of three small island developing States and a delta country that was largely below sea level. As a result, cooperation and partnership in water management were crucial. His Government strongly supported the recent initiative of the High-level Panel on Water to change the way in which water was valued and to outline an inclusive approach to the sustainable management of water resources. The Netherlands had also set the goal of achieving a fully circular economy by 2050. Rather than disposing of waste, it should be used as raw materials for new products.

118. Sustainability had proven to be a sound business practice; economic prosperity and a healthy environment could go hand in hand. The Netherlands worked with other countries around the world to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, for which it was necessary to mobilize the whole of society and involve all stakeholders, particularly youth.

119. **Ms. Clemens** (Netherlands), youth delegate, said that young people were working to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals across the globe. In Berlin, a youth movement had led to the adoption of one of the most progressive bicycle laws in the world. In Senegal, young people were fighting extremism with hip-hop music. In the Netherlands, young professionals had helped to make the Paris Agreement more ambitious. Nevertheless, only 10 Member States had included youth delegates at the high-level political forum. In addition, the geographical representation among those delegates was highly unbalanced, as they

were nearly all European. There were 1.8 billion young people in the world, 90 per cent of whom lived in developing countries, and the international community had a responsibility to bring those young voices to the forum.

120. **Mr. Stormoen** (Norway), Director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that implementing the 2030 Agenda was a strategic priority for his Government. Vulnerable populations were particularly impacted by conflict, fragility, the depletion of natural resources and climate change, and related crises often led to large flows of refugees and migrants. With the right policies, the international community could put an end to poverty in all its forms and ensure prosperity for coming generations.

121. Several important policy areas for his Government were anchored in the 2030 Agenda. For example, the Prime Minister had recently launched a high-level panel on building a sustainable ocean economy, and Norway was establishing a multi-donor trust fund with the World Bank to improve ocean waste management and prevent marine litter. Regarding Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education, a combination of global and domestic financing was necessary to ensure that all children had access to quality education. Norway therefore encouraged partner countries to build statistical capacity and increase allocations to 20 per cent of national budgets.

122. Corruption and illicit capital flows undermined inclusive development and posed a serious threat to security. In that connection, the Government had recently established a knowledge bank for technical cooperation and a tax development programme. Given that coherent national policies would enhance the quality of international development cooperation, his Government had established a policy coherence forum with members of civil society, academia, youth and women groups, the private sector, and trade and employers' unions.

123. A strong, legitimate multilateral system was necessary to secure the values and interests inherent in the 2030 Agenda. Norway therefore applauded the steps taken by the Secretary-General to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system to deliver a coherent response to sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals made it possible to seek new solutions that were not dictated by the unpredictability of the future, and Norway was heeding the call for change.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.

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President: Mr. Mahmadaminov (Vice-President) ..... (Tajikistan)

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In the absence of Ms. Chatardova (Czechia), Mr. Mahmadaminov (Tajikistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

Agenda item 5: High-level segment (*continued*) (E/2018/61)

(a) Ministerial meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (*continued*) (E/2018/64)

General debate (continued)

1. **The President** invited the ministerial meeting to resume its general debate on the theme "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies".

2. **Ms. Smerkolj** (Slovenia), Minister without portfolio responsible for Development, Strategic Projects and Cohesion, said that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development had been born of the need to develop and implement more flexible policies to address global unpredictability. The first set of voluntary national reviews submitted had revealed a great commitment to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, but also that implementation efforts were insufficient in areas that required wider partnerships, including internationally. In 2017, Slovenia had presented its voluntary national review; in December of the same year, the country had adopted its new National Development Strategy 2030, which was aligned with the 2030 Agenda. The country was now taking the first steps to integrate the 2030 Agenda into its budgetary process and was developing partnerships with businesses and local communities. Slovenia had also updated its development cooperation programmes to deliver on the 2030 Agenda. Development was a continuous process, not a single achievable goal. The world was changing at an unprecedented rate, which required Governments to learn faster and govern smarter. The 2030 Agenda must be a source of hope and action.

3. **Mr. Aumane** (Lesotho), Minister of Development Planning, said that Lesotho was currently finalizing its National Strategic Development Plan, with an emphasis on mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals. New polices focusing on population, housing and gender were aligned with 2030 Agenda, and the Government was collaborating with various United Nations agencies to develop advocacy programmes at the national and community levels.

4. Lesotho was a small mountainous country which provided much of the water used by Southern Africa. It had made substantial progress in terms of national access to water, which now stood at 77 per cent, whilst access to improved sanitation stood at around 44 per cent. The Government was mobilizing resources to develop water and sanitation infrastructure, protect water sources, augment water harvesting and distribution and enhance water access, especially for poor households in urban areas. Lesotho had also begun investing in water and energy feasibility studies to create a pipeline of bankable projects to serve local and regional water and energy demand.

5. Despite significant potential for hydro, solar and wind clean energy production, Lesotho still suffered from a low rate of access to electricity and a high use of bioenergy, especially in rural areas. The Government had therefore embarked on an extensive programme for rural electrification and the promotion of energy-efficient technologies for cooking and heating. It would soon complete a comprehensive energy master plan to direct investment in the sector, with an overall view to greening the economy.

6. Although Lesotho had one of the lowest levels of urbanization in the Southern African region, its urban population was rapidly expanding, which put a strain on infrastructure, including transport, housing, water, sanitation, electricity and health services. The Government was working to attract investment in order to upgrade city roads, introduce smart public transport systems and enhance fire-fighting and waste treatment facilities. Lesotho had also ratified several multilateral environmental agreements, but was faced with the challenges of implementing those agreements due to its low resilience and the prevalence of mountain communities. The Government was therefore finalizing a disaster risk management strategy and exploring financial instruments to manage disaster risks, in part by tapping into existing climate financing mechanisms. Development partners must provide the necessary financial and technical support, while encouraging private investments and further integrating least developed countries and other developing States into global value chains to realize the 2030 Agenda.

7. **Ms. Boulama Kané** (Niger), Minister of Planning, said that the 2030 Agenda could only be achieved by transforming rural communities, developing human capital and promoting the private sector. Niger had launched several national strategies for economic and social development as well as inclusive and sustainable growth. In her country, 80 per cent of the population lived in rural communities, and the rural sector accounted for more than 40 per cent of gross domestic

product. Rural communities must therefore be seen as a pillar of inclusive growth to ensure a viable and resilient society. Agropastoral production must be increased to guarantee food security, increase revenues, create steady jobs for rural youth, empower rural women, ensure access to water, energy and inclusive finance and promote technological innovation.

8. Human capital should be developed through high-quality education and training for all, increased literacy, improved nutrition, access to health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health, and the implementation of a social protection system. Society must be transformed through such investments in human capital, including by tapping into youth, who accounted for more than 75 per cent of the population. The private sector also embodied great potential for economic growth and should be promoted by reducing the cost of energy, transport and information and communications technologies.

9. While the transformation of rural communities, the development of human capital and the promotion of the private sector were essential elements to consider when working towards the achievement of a viable and resilient society, it was also necessary to address security matters, which influenced all development actions. In the Sahel, as insecurity threatened social stability, budgetary resources were increasingly devoted to security. In fact, there could be no development without security.

10. **Mr. Rahimzoda** (Tajikistan), First Deputy Minister of Energy and Water, said that Tajikistan had presented its voluntary national review in 2017, sharing its progress in eradicating poverty and improving the education sector. Although Tajikistan had significant water resources, population growth, climate change and a lack of finance hampered its achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6. Despite national efforts, 40 per cent of the population still did not have access to safe drinking water and, every year, water-related disasters caused enormous economic hardship. Obsolete infrastructures also caused massive losses in water use. To address water issues, the Government had spent $1 billion over the previous 15 years. There were currently 10 projects under way totalling an investment of $350 million aimed at achieving Goal 6. In 2015, Tajikistan had also adopted a water sector reform programme for 2016–2025.

11. His country also worked to advance water issues at the global level. To meet the objectives of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018–2028, which had been unanimously adopted by the General Assembly in 2016, Tajikistan had organized a high-level conference attended by over 110 countries, providing a timely and necessary platform for developing recommendations. The Government had established an international water decade centre at the national level and called for more high-level international conferences. Ensuring energy independence was one of the country's strategic goals and was thus aligned with target 7.1. Tajikistan possessed vast amounts of hydropower potential, only 5 per cent of which was currently being exploited. The Government was taking comprehensive measures to balance the production and consumption of energy by modernizing its hydropower plants, creating new facilities for generating power and passing new energy legislation.

12. The Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project (CASA-1000 project) marked a positive new development in the Central Asian region, including the resumption of operations to reconnect his country's energy system with a unified Central Asian system. The project was the key to unlocking the country's hydropower with a view to supplying green electricity to neighbouring countries, thus contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 7 in the region. Rapid population growth and urbanization meant that demand for basic services would continue to increase in years to come; Tajikistan had therefore begun developing master plans for all its towns and cities to ensure that everyone had access to affordable housing, water and sanitation services, electricity and sustainable transport.

13. **Mr. Naughten** (Ireland), Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, said that Ireland had just presented its first voluntary national review with the help of two youth delegates. The efforts of all communities were needed to achieve the transformative vision outlined in the 2030 Agenda and embodied by the Sustainable Development Goals. By working together while acknowledging sector-specific challenges, the transition to a sustainable future would be possible.

14. Ireland recognized the valuable contribution of civil society to the achievement of the Goals and strongly supported the participation of all stakeholders. In its voluntary national review, the country had acknowledged that its Government must do more, in the hope that being honest about the challenges it faced would help to galvanize efforts.

15. A 500-million-euro Climate Action Fund had been created; at 126 euros for every man, woman and child in Ireland, it was the biggest per capita fund of its type in the world. Ireland had also pledged 1.2 million euros to

support the Great Green Wall project aimed at combating desertification in the Sahel. Irish legislators had moreover just taken the first steps towards divesting from fossil fuels at the national level.

16. The responses to cross-border challenges must be collective. His country appreciated hearing from other States with diverse national circumstances.

17. **Mr. Mnatsakanyan** (Armenia), Minister for Foreign Affairs, said that institutional strength and good governance were critical for ensuring peaceful, prosperous and sustainable futures for all. As such, Sustainable Development Goal 16 continued to be an overarching priority for Armenia as part of its reform agenda. The Government had developed an institutional framework to align the country's national priorities and strategies with the Goals, a process that was complemented by ambitious reforms and the launching of new special platforms for cooperation between the Government and the United Nations country team.

18. Armenia valued the contribution of civil society to public life and promoted the role of civil society at the global level in addressing developmental and humanitarian issues. As a middle-income developing country with a challenging mountain environment, Armenia prioritized climate change and disaster risk reduction strategies. In 2017, the country had adopted a national disaster risk reduction strategy that translated the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and the relevant Sustainable Development Goals into tangible measures for sustainable, risk-informed and disaster-resilient sectoral development. Armenia welcomed regional dialogue and cooperation with a view to integrating disaster risk reduction priorities into development policies.

19. In June 2018, Armenia had hosted the Subregional Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction for Central Asia and the Caucasus, which had focused on promoting effective public-private partnerships for risk-sensitive investment. The relevance of regional and subregional cooperation for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda could not be overemphasized, as it was the basis not only for advancing mutual interests among neighbouring countries, but also represented an important confidence-building measure in situations of unresolved conflict. Such cooperation could also promote peace and security, as well as economic growth.

20. In sharing its voluntary national review the day before, Armenia had highlighted the important role of partnerships for innovation. In that context, the country had organized, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme and the International Organisation of la Francophonie, a high-level panel on the role of innovation and social enterprise. Armenia enjoyed close cooperation with its Francophonie family, which translated into significant partnerships in the realms of sustainable development, digital technologies, youth and innovation. It looked forward to hosting the seventeenth Francophonie Summit in October 2018, which would include an economic forum bringing together entrepreneurs, members of the business community and representatives of international and regional economic organizations to discuss major regional and international economic challenges and promote good economic relations.

21. Over the previous year, Armenia had undergone a peaceful transformation and a change of government; it had begun a comprehensive reform programme with a strong focus on democratic governance. The current Government had received a very strong mandate from its people to continue with the reforms aimed at strengthening the justice system and the rule of law while increasing opportunities for all.

22. **Mr. Santana** (Dominican Republic), Minister of Economy, Planning and Development, said that his country was a small Caribbean island State which had undertaken massive efforts to ensure social and economic development and strong economic growth for over two decades; now classified as an upper-middle-income country, the Dominican Republic had managed to reduce poverty, maintain a high level of macroeconomic stability and ensure a peaceful and democratic environment. However, the country still faced a number of challenges related to poverty, social security, public insecurity, teenage pregnancy, maternal and infant mortality, gender-based violence and inequality and informal labour.

23. With a view to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, his country had established the High-level Inter-institutional Sustainable Development Commission. The private sector, academia, local governments, civil society and the national congress were all active stakeholders in the process of achieving the Goals, which were largely aligned with the country's own national development strategy for 2030.

24. With the support of the United Nations system, the Dominican Republic had conducted a study aimed at mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support wherein the national priorities stemming from the Sustainable Development Goals had been established as: lowering the rate of multidimensional poverty; generating jobs and enhancing competitivity; promoting sustainable consumption and production; increasing resilience to climate change; and ensuring stable and inclusive institutions. Presented in 2018, the country's voluntary

national review had focused on the issues of multidimensional poverty and sustainable consumption and production.

25. **Ms. Orelope-Adefulire** (Nigeria), Senior Special Assistant to the President of Nigeria, said that one of the critical challenges facing all African countries, including Nigeria, was the provision of sustainable basic services, particularly water supply and sanitation services. Therefore, Nigeria was actively working to transform its water utility sector. Since 2004, the Government had supported an urban water supply and sanitation sector reform; it had recently approved a national water, sanitation and hygiene action plan. The country had also declared a state of emergency regarding water, sanitation and hygiene services.

26. For many years, land degradation, drought and desertification had hindered sustainable development on the African continent. The Sahara Desert was currently advancing southwards at an alarming rate. One consequence was that Lake Chad, one of the largest freshwater lakes, had shrunk by 95 per cent, causing economic hardship for millions of families that had relied on those water resources; there were alarming predictions that the lake would dry out completely within 20 years. Nigeria was cooperating with other countries of the Lake Chad Basin Commission to construct 2,500 kilometres of navigational channels from River Ubangi in the Congo Basin to recharge Lake Chad. Those efforts would require an unprecedented level of practical cooperation by Member States, as well as technical cooperation, investments and financial partnerships. In 2016, the Sustainability, Stability and Security in Africa initiative had been launched; it aimed to stabilize risk in the region by creating new jobs for the most vulnerable populations through large-scale investment, land rehabilitation and sustainable land management.

27. **Ms. Elsaid** (Egypt), Minister of Planning, Follow-up and Administrative Reform, said that her country had been among the first to adopt a national plan for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Vision 2030, launched by Egypt in February 2016, involved both the private sector and civil society, and had already produced positive indicators that had exceeded expectations and were being reflected in inclusive growth and increased competitiveness. A number of national infrastructure projects were not only stimulating the Egyptian economy, but also providing decent jobs, including for women and youth. Further details could be found in her country's voluntary national review, which it had just presented to the high-level political forum the previous day.

28. The entire world, but particularly the Middle East and North Africa region, were facing challenges to development resulting from rapid economic and political change. Meeting those challenges would require an international solidarity that the United Nations was particularly well equipped to coordinate. South-South and North-South cooperation were also needed, as were exchange of expertise, technology-sharing, funding mechanisms and foreign direct investment. Her country was heavily engaged in international cooperation on sustainable development, and, as current Chair of the Group of 77 and China, had organized a number of side events at the forum.

29. **Mr. García** (Uruguay), Director of the Office of Planning and Budget, said that Uruguay remained strongly committed to the 2030 Agenda. The involvement of public and private stakeholders in that framework was an opportunity to mobilize joint action around common goals in Uruguay in order to improve quality of life and build a more inclusive, environmentally sustainable and economically viable future for all. As highlighted in its voluntary national review presented the previous day, the Government had been working since 2017 to raise awareness and disseminate the Sustainable Development Goals throughout Uruguay, marked by the hashtag #Uruguaysumavalor.

30. Regarding Sustainable Development Goal 6, access to potable water and sanitation for all was a fundamental human right enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic. In Uruguay, over 99 per cent of the population had access to water and electricity. In that regard, Uruguay had positioned itself at the forefront of the use of renewable energy worldwide. The key to its success in that area was a long-term State policy and a solid institutional and regulatory framework.

31. Sustainable Development Goal 11 on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable was being implemented around three thematic areas: social inclusion and well-being, sustainability and climate change, and urban governance. Less than 10 per cent of the population of Uruguay lived below the poverty line. To foster resilience and mitigate natural disasters, early warning systems had been developed. Greater focus was being placed on risk analysis and a national climate change policy had been approved. Coordinated work had been done across institutions to promote regional management in urban systems with broad participation from civil society organizations.

32. Regarding Sustainable Development Goal 12 on ensuring responsible consumption and production

patterns, Uruguayan regulatory frameworks and public policies promoted the sustainable management of water resources; the responsible and sustainable use of soils and surface water; and the use of clean technology, waste reduction and reusable packaging, among other initiatives. The circular economy, cleaner production and improved environmental performance in manufacturing industries were promoted through a variety of programmes. On 17 July 2018, his country had participated in the launch of an international high-level alliance on the management of chemicals and waste in cooperation with the Government of Sweden.

33. Regarding Sustainable Development Goal 15, progress had been made on the conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems through the national biodiversity strategy and the strategic plan for the national system of protected areas.

34. **Mr. Berdimuhamedov** (Turkmenistan), Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, said that Turkmenistan had been among the first countries to formally adopt the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, 148 targets and 194 indicators.

35. A national monitoring body had been established under the Ministry of Finance and Economy to review the achievement of the Goals and prepare reports. Moreover, the Government had signed the Partnership Framework for Development with the United Nations for the period 2016–2020 to integrate the Goals into the country's National Programme on Socioeconomic Development for 2018–2024, taking into account local peculiarities and priorities. The Training and Methodology Centre for Sustainable Development Goals served as a platform for training and raising awareness about the 2030 Agenda. Businesses, academia and civil society, including organizations for women and youth, all made a significant contribution to sustainable development.

36. Turkmenistan would report its progress through its national voluntary review during the high-level political forum in 2019. As a member of both the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Turkmenistan attached particular importance to cooperation with the United Nations regional commissions, which played an important role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

37. **Mr. Kadel** (Nepal), Vice-Chairman of the National Planning Commission, said that Nepal had focused on the timely, effective and full implementation of the 2030 Agenda since its adoption and on its synergy with other programmes of action, including the Istanbul Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 and the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Least Developed Countries.

38. Nepal was a landlocked, mountainous and least developed country emerging from conflict and from the devastating earthquake of 2015 and other natural disasters. As such, it had high hopes for the high-level political forum. During its voluntary national review in 2017, Nepal had highlighted its progress and unique challenges in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In that context, in its 2018 report (E/2018/33), the Committee for Development Policy had recommended that the consideration of Nepal for graduation from the status of least developed country be deferred until 2021. The country had only progressed by approximately 50 per cent towards the required income threshold for graduation and other vulnerabilities were high. His country had always focused on smooth and sustainable graduation.

39. Nepal was making all-out efforts to fully implement the inclusive and rights-based Constitution promulgated in 2015. Accordingly, three elections had been successfully held at the local, provincial and federal levels. With political stability achieved, the focus had shifted to economic prosperity under the Government programme entitled "Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali".

40. The Government had set a target to increase basic water supply and improve sanitation coverage to 95 per cent by 2030. To that end, it had established a dedicated ministry for water supply to holistically deal with water and sanitation issues. Programmes were in place to reduce inequalities and increase the percentage of households living in safe housing to 60 per cent by 2030. Sustainable production and consumption patterns were also a high priority for his Government. Regarding terrestrial ecosystems, Nepal aimed to maintain 55 per cent of its total land as forest and 23 per cent as protected areas to protect its endangered species of flora and fauna.

41. The current level of global cooperation and business as usual fell far too short. All means of implementation for development, including official development assistance and technology and capacity-building, must be strengthened, especially for least developed countries and landlocked least developed countries. While Nepal was committed to doing all that it could, including through foreign partnerships and in the public, private and social sectors at home, it looked forward to increased cooperation from all international partners for necessary industries, technology and other policy supports. The credibility of the high-level political forum would be defined by its ability to provide

leadership to effectively implement the 2030 Agenda through system-wide coherence in sustainable development programmes and policies.

42. **Mr. Sánchez** (Panama), Vice-Minister of the Environment, said that his Government had rolled out a number of actions focused on the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals with active participation from the broadest sectors of society.

43. Panama was committed to a national process of awareness-raising and empowerment, which coincided with the review and follow-up process of the 2030 Agenda through the high-level political forum. On 2 July 2018 the Government had launched a "Sustainable Development Goals Month" promoted from the highest political level. The campaign was using influential spokespersons called Ambassadors for the Sustainable Development Goals in an effort to connect more people with the 2030 Agenda.

44. The Government had managed to break out of old paradigms in its environmental and social management. Through cross-sectoral efforts, the Sustainable Development Goals had been aligned with the State strategic vision plan, Panama 2030. Some important milestones were the creation of the Ministry of the Environment in 2015 and the optimization of State environmental financing through the Water, Protected Areas and Wildlife Trust.

45. With regard to Sustainable Development Goal 6 on safe water and sanitation, the Government had drafted a national water security plan for the period 2015–2050, which prioritized the protection of ecosystems and the country's 52 water basins. It had also established the National Water Council to implement that plan. Under Goal 15 on terrestrial ecosystems, a reforestation programme had been established to restore one million hectares of degraded forest and to protect the country's water sources and biodiversity. Lastly, the State had committed to allocating $15 million of its annual budget to the financing of reforestation projects.

46. **Ms. Luveni** (Fiji), Speaker of Parliament, said that Fiji was firmly committed to the Sustainable Development Goals and had used them as the framework to define its country vision within one year of their acceptance by the General Assembly. In 2019, Fiji would present its voluntary national review. Her delegation was convinced that the Goals would be achieved by 2030 despite the challenges that remained.

47. Those challenges were shared with many countries and included difficulties in accessing grant and concessionary financing. The ambitions of smaller island States and landlocked countries required private sector financing as they could not be met through domestic resources and concessionary loans alone. Fiji had therefore issued its first green bond to support its commitments.

48. It was urgent for the United Nations system to work to reduce risks such as climate change that threatened achievement of the Goals. Island States were the most exposed to climate change. Severe weather and frequent flooding destroyed agriculture and livelihoods. Acidification, overfishing and illegal fishing, rising sea levels and warming waters adversely impacted communities. Climate and oceanic shocks must be tackled as they could wipe out the gains made in achieving the Goals. Innovations in financing, new technologies, and domestic and global partnerships were more important than ever to speed up progress.

49. Parliaments played a pivotal role in maintaining focus on the Sustainable Development Goals, but they needed good data to evaluate progress. Fiji welcomed the support provided through the United Nations Development Programme and the Inter-Parliamentary Union and looked forward to an even stronger partnership going forward.

50. Women and youth were at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals in developing interventions, defining challenges and proposing solutions. Above all, the Goals must work for them. Women and youth must be at the heart of the journey towards achievement of the Goals.

51. **Mr. Chibis** (Russian Federation), Vice-Minister of Construction, Housing and Utilities, said that in recent years the Russian Federation had once again made international sustainable development assistance a key component of its foreign policy. In late 2017, aggregate Russian assistance had surpassed $1.2 billion, one quarter of which was funnelled through the United Nations development system. The Russian Federation not only donated its expertise but also provided financial assistance for projects in such areas as health care, education, environment, food security and socioeconomic development with an overall emphasis on poverty eradication. Priority attention was given to the modernization of trade and economic infrastructure and industry and to cooperation to combat terrorism and organized crime.

52. Nationally, measures were being implemented to enhance the quality of life of the Russian people, which was fully in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. Such measures were particularly timely in the context of Sustainable Development Goal 11 on making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable and in the light of the New Urban Agenda. A government housing

initiative launched in 2008 had enabled over 1 million people to move into modern apartments. A large-scale renovation project, with the owners themselves as key investors, had also modernized more than 120,000 residences in apartment buildings over the previous four years.

53. Despite the difficult climate conditions, the number of interruptions to water and heating services had been significantly reduced in recent years. Such improvements were also the result of proactive development of public-private partnerships, concessions and the introduction of cutting-edge technology.

54. A project was being launched to digitize Russian cities. Russian computer programmers were among the best in the world and their assistance would enable the use of digital technology to implement the concept of the smart city. A major project for the beautification of towns and cities had been launched to provide a safe and comfortable environment for all; its results were visible in Moscow. A referendum had been held on the beautification project and 18 million citizens had voted in favour.

55. Athletics infrastructure was an important element of comfortable cities. The 2018 Fédération internationale de football association (FIFA) World Cup had just been held in Russia. That had significantly contributed to beautifying 11 cities. Russia hoped that the spirit of the 2018 FIFA World Cup, which had brought together millions of people around the world, would be reflected at the United Nations to advance urgent development priorities.

56. **Mr. Flomo** (Liberia), Deputy Minister for Economic Management, Minister of Finance and Development Planning, said that economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters were inimical to the attainment of the 2030 Agenda and developing countries were the most vulnerable to those events. The theme of "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies" was therefore particularly important because it drew attention to the devastating effects of external and internal shocks and highlighted the need to formulate ways and means of reducing vulnerabilities and building resilience. The Secretary-General's report on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2018/64) provided an opportunity for all to collectively appraise the current situation and challenges.

57. Those challenges included issues related to Sustainable Development Goals 6, 7 and 11. Too many people still lacked access to safe water and proper sanitation facilities. Countries faced difficulties in formulating national priorities and policies to deliver energy for all. Much work remained to remedy the lack of adequate housing and resilient infrastructure, while vulnerability to disasters persisted and environmental impacts remained unaddressed.

58. To ensure achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Government of Liberia had adopted a transformative development plan called the Pro Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development, which would address basic needs for income security and provide better access to services and opportunities for self-improvement in an inclusive and stable enabling environment. The plan had four overarching aims that considered the Goals in the context of Liberia and sought to draw all Liberians at home and abroad into the national development process. The aims were to empower the people through the reduction of developmental inequalities; achieve economic stability and create jobs through effective resource mobilization and prudent management of economic inclusion; sustain peace by promoting a cohesive, sustainable and united society; and, through good governance and transparency, create an inclusive and accountable public sector for shared prosperity.

59. His delegation reaffirmed its commitment to the 2030 Agenda and looked forward to its successful implementation to move the world in a direction that was beneficial to all.

60. **Mr. De Laiglesia** (Spain), Vice-Minister of International Cooperation, Ibero-America and the Caribbean, said that, at a difficult moment for Spain, the 2030 Agenda was triggering an unprecedented mobilization of efforts and had brought about broad consensus in his country in support of transformation towards a more sustainable and resilient society. As Spain prepared for its first voluntary national review, it was more committed than ever to the Sustainable Development Goals. On 29 June 2018, the Cabinet had approved the action plan for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda with the commitment of the 17 autonomous communities and local governments. The plan contained a summary of the situation of citizens, civil society groups, businesses and universities. The new Government that had taken power in June 2018 had made the 2030 Agenda the centrepiece of its policies and had taken immediate action to implement it.

61. The new Government had appointed high commissioners for the 2030 Agenda and for the fight against child poverty. It was also leading by example in the fight for gender equality: most of the ministers of the new Government were women. A Ministry for the Ecological Transition had been created, bringing

together the ministries in charge of energy, environment, water and climate change. Regarding commitments with the European Union on compliance with the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, there had been a transformation from a conservative position to the most ambitious position. The Ministry of Equality, which had previously been eliminated, had been restored under the leadership of the Deputy Prime Minister. Those changes demonstrated the commitment of Spain to place the 2030 Agenda at the centre of its identity in the world and of its European and multilateral policy. The leadership provided by the United Nations system was key to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Spain reiterated its firm commitment to the reform of that system pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/279.

62. **Mr. Nguyen** Phuong (Viet Nam), Vice-Minister of Planning and Investment, said that the 2030 Agenda expressed the determination of global leaders to take the bold and transformative steps needed to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path. His delegation noted the progress made worldwide in the transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies.

63. Reform, innovation, creativity and economic restructuring were setting his country on a path to prosperity. Internationalization of production enabled global and regional cooperation and integration for sustainable development. New advances in science and technology were paving the way to bring humanity to a higher level of development. However, poverty, discrimination, humanitarian crises, epidemics and climate change still threatened the livelihoods of billions of people. Recent uncertainties and inward-looking policies posed challenges to global economic interests and processes, undermining sustainable employment and livelihoods, inclusive and sustainable industrialization and efficient use of resources. Rapid urbanization was burdening many societies in managing population growth, providing adequate housing and resilient infrastructure and addressing environmental issues.

64. Among the challenges in building sustainable and resilient societies, his delegation wished to underscore the lingering armed conflicts, violent extremism and soaring inequalities that continued to threaten peace, security and stability in many regions of the world. Experience had shown that peace and stability were prerequisites for sustainable development. States must do their utmost to ensure peace and security at the national, regional and international levels on the basis of respect for international law.

65. Sustainable and resilient societies must regain balance after disruption and crises, but also transform and develop solutions in order to cope with present and future challenges. Countries must begin by transforming themselves while leaving no one behind. Viet Nam would use its domestic resources and mainstream sustainability into its development vision, strategy and policy with its people at the centre. As success could be achieved only with stronger global partnerships, developed countries must uphold their responsibility and take the lead in assisting developing nations in achieving the Goals, especially through financing capacity-building and technology and through trade facilitation. Viet Nam was committed to sparing no effort in pursuing sustainable development.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.